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EVERY WEEKDAY

Plea for end to 'gossip column politics'

Cook doing superb job, says Blair

By Roland Watson, Political Correspondent

TONY BLAIR appealed to voters yesterday to rise above the personal shortcomings of his ministers after Robin Cook's former wife published an intimate and embarrassing account of their failed marriage.

The Prime Minister said that British politics was in danger of being relegated to little more than a gossip column, "an extension of Hollywood", if ministers' private lives remained relentlessly under the microscope.

He gave his Foreign Secretary unqualified support, insisting that Margaret Cook's tales of infidelity, drunkenness and fits of depression did not diminish the "superb job" he was doing for the country.

After three weeks dominated by resignation and the personal rivalries at the top of his government, Mr Blair also tried to paint the episode as a watershed in the relationship between politicians and the public. He said: "We've got to decide what we want the political agenda to be. We can either go through the personal lives of all Cabinet ministers and pick them apart, or we can decide that the Government should be judged on the promises that it made."

His comments came as Mr Cook's friends insisted that it was "business as usual" despite the humiliating detail of Mrs Cook's account of their 28-year marriage, serialised in *The Sunday Times* yesterday. She claims that in the 1980s



"You're paranoid — I'm writing a shopping list"

her husband was prone to heavy drinking which took him to the "brink of total mental and physical collapse", and she said she was repeatedly tied to her while having six affairs, including the one with Gaynor Regan, now the second Mrs Cook.

Potentially as wounding to Mr Cook's political future was her description of how the former left-wing firebrand admitted he had "sold his soul to the devil" to remain aboard Mr Blair's new Labour project.

Mr Blair dismissed the claims as little more than "scandal and gossip and trivia", insisting it was irrelevant when compared to the business of government. But he appeared to concede that there

were personal differences among senior ministers, a running theme since Peter Mandelson's resignation. He said: "You could go to any organisation, any big business, and say there's this personal problem with this individual or this personal difficulty. But most people would say, well, judge the organisation or company on whether they're doing the things they're supposed to do well."

The Tories leapt on Mrs Cook's revelations, claiming that the Foreign Secretary would no longer be able to do his job. Iain Duncan-Smith, the Tory social security spokesman, said they made him a "laughing stock", while Michael Howard, the Shadow Foreign Secretary, said the claims were "another nail in Robin Cook's political coffin".

Labour insiders said the claims did not necessarily affect Mr Cook's long-term future, although they conceded that much depended on how quickly he was able to shift to focus back onto his job. Mr Cook declined to comment on his former wife's book. As part of a routine working day at Chevening, his grace-and-favour mansion in Kent, he spent 20 minutes on the telephone to Madeline Albright, the US Secretary of State, discussing Kosovo and Iraq, as well as preparing a statement on Yemen which he will deliver to the Commons today.



Margaret Cook leaving her Edinburgh home yesterday as a storm broke over her tales of infidelity and drunkenness

But in a clear sign that the headlines prompted by the book were far worse than he had feared, he changed his original strategy for dealing with the book's publication. He had asked friends to say nothing, but in the event, Labour MPs queued up to rebut

her claims — especially about his drinking habits. Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, said the suggestion that he had a drink problem "certainly isn't the Robin I know and have known for many years". And Donald Anderson, chairman of the For-

eign Affairs Select Committee, said that Mrs Cook's "totally incredible" claim about her former husband's drinking cast doubt on her other allegations. The former Cabinet minister Harriet Harman, who worked with Mr Cook on La-

bour's health team at the time Mrs Cook says he was drinking heavily, said she was "astounded" by the claims.

Domestic drama, page 4
No regret or apology, page 5
W. Rees-Mogg, page 20
Leading article, page 21

Cash is there to give big pay rise to nurses

By Janet Bush, Economics Editor

THE Government could comfortably afford an above-average pay increase for Britain's nurses, in spite of the threat of economic recession this year, according to City forecasts.

The predictions suggest that the Government is heading for a budget surplus of up to £10 billion this year because tax receipts have been far higher than expected.

This war chest of public money means that finances will still be roughly in balance even if the economy slows down sharper than expected.

Michael Saunders of the American investment house Salomon Smith Barney, said: "The UK's public finances seem to be in better shape than anyone has dared to believe."

He said that the huge surplus now expected would ease worries about the affordability of the generous public spending plans announced in the autumn and might even allow the Chancellor to cut business taxes.

Against this background, a generous increase in nurses' pay is affordable so long as the Treasury believes that it would pay a political dividend.

Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, is reported to be in favour of a 5 per cent increase, payable in full rather than phased. The question is whether the Treasury will be prepared to find the extra cash as well as compromise on its determination to continue bearing down on public sector pay. A 5 per cent increase — the level expected to be recommended by the pay review body this week — would add about £330 million to the £6.6 billion annual nurses' bill.

Nurses' shortage, page 2
Leading article, page 21

Yemeni pledge

Yemeni ministers have promised that they will not use force to try to free John Brooke, a British oil worker seized by tribesmen on Saturday, and negotiations for his release are continuing.

His abductors, who are demanding the release of a comrade accused of murder and sabotage, say that he is being well-treated, but that he will be killed if troops surrounding their hideout attempt a rescue. Page 3

Betty Boothroyd set to quit early as Speaker

By Our Political Correspondent

BETTY BOOTHROYD is considering standing down as Speaker of the House of Commons before the next election.

Ministers believe Miss Boothroyd could retire from her role as one of the nation's figureheads in 2000, earlier than expected. She will be 70 shortly before the millennium, and having seen through both milestones from the Speaker's chair her friends believe she may give her successor a start in the tall end of this Parliament.

Retiring then would still guarantee her a place as one of the longest-serving Speakers in recent memory, as well as being the first woman to hold the office. It would also spark a by-election in her West Bromwich West constituency, as former Speakers do not return to the Commons backbenches. Labour MPs have recently

detected signs of fatigue in the Speaker, who has been at loggerheads with ministers over their habit of making government announcements outside the Commons.

She is also deeply conservative as a parliamentarian, and has set herself four-square against the Government's attempts to modernise the Palace of Westminster. Although widely admired by her multi-million-strong television audience worldwide, Miss Boothroyd, a former *Till* girl, has attracted private criticism from both sides of the House.

Loyalist Labour MPs feel she can be too lenient in giving air time in the Commons chamber to government critics, such as Tony Benn and George Galloway over Iraq. But Tories used to make the same complaint when they

were in government and friends of the Speaker say it shows she is doing her job.

Miss Boothroyd has signalled that her reign would come to an end at the next election. But she has told friends she may go earlier. "There's a general expectation that she won't stand at the next election," said one.

The suggestion that Miss Boothroyd will go sooner rather than later will accelerate the search for a successor. The most obvious candidate is Sir Alan Haselhurst, one of her Tory deputies. Although lacking her star quality, he has the respect of all sides of the House.

A strong contender is Alan Beth, the Liberal Democrat deputy leader. Other Tory candidates would include former Cabinet ministers Tom King and John MacGregor.

Santer battles to stave off censure

From Charles Bremner in Brussels

JACQUES SANTER goes before the European Parliament with his 19 commissioners to-night in an attempt to defuse a censure vote that is certain to inflict heavy political damage and could force the whole Brussels executive to resign.

In the first serious showdown with the executive since the Strasbourg assembly acquired more muscle under the Maastricht treaty, many of the 626 MEPs are determined to hold the Commission to account for mismanagement, fraud, corruption and other malpractices. Mr Santer, the Commission President, will need every ounce of his political skill to ensure that he does not spend his final 11 months in office as the lamest of ducks.

He is, however, expected to escape the all-or-nothing vote on Thursday, which requires a two-thirds majority and which would sack his whole team, paralysing all business ahead of negotiations on European Union spending. The leadership of the dominant Socialist bloc is not backing censure, although its British leader Pauline Green precipitated the crisis by proposing the motion last month to clear the air after Parliament refused to sign off the Commission's accounts.

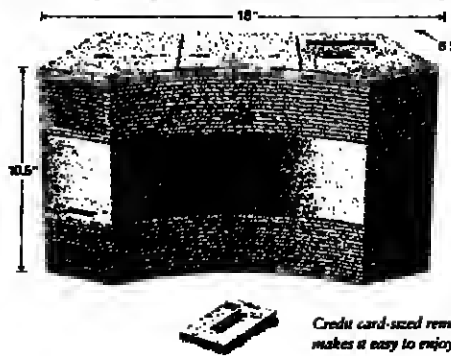
Leaders of the centre-right European People's Party, the second group, wants its MEPs to back the Commission, provided Mr Santer promises reform. Support for all-out censure comes from the Greens and other groups, including German Socialists rebels.

However, with passions running high and the Commission gripped by a mood of siege, the outcome remains uncertain.

EU showdown, page 13
Leading article, page 21

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Marquess of Bristol found dead in bed

By Claudia Joseph

THE Marquess of Bristol, who scandalised society with his debauchery and drug abuse, has died suddenly at his Suffolk home, aged 44.

Lord Bristol, who was jailed twice for possessing drugs, was found dead in bed yesterday morning by staff at Little Horringer Hall on the Ickworth estate.

His death comes a year after that of his half-brother and then heir, Lord Nicholas Hervey, a schizophrenic who was found hanged at his London flat at the age of 36. His other half-brother, Lord Frederick Hervey, who left Eton for university last year, will become the eighth Marquess.

Lord Bristol's agent, Simon Pott, said last night that the marquess had visited

the doctor last week with a bout of flu, but that his death was still a great shock. "He was perfectly well over Christmas and was discussing going to the Bahamas for a couple of weeks."

"I spoke to him on Friday and he was a bit under the weather, but he was making plans for his holiday. He had a light meal on Saturday evening but was found dead yesterday. Everyone is devastated."

Lord Bristol, who was educated at Harrow and Neuchatel University, had a chequered life starting with a strict childhood, in which he once claimed that he was made to wear long white gloves. Those years, coupled with his parents' divorce when he was five, were said to have been the root of his life of debauchery and frequent brushes with the law. He was

fined for stealing traffic bollards, was once accused of blasting the door of a fridge with a shotgun to get a bottle of champagne, and found himself unwelcome in both America and Australia because of his drugs habit.

He was married in 1984 to the 20-year-old daughter of a property developer, but that ended in divorce and he swiftly returned to his old lifestyle.

Lord Bristol inherited £4 million, the 4,000-acre Ickworth estate, a 57,000-acre sheep station in Australia and four oil wells from his father in 1985, and he once estimated his personal fortune at £30 million. But last April he sold the Ickworth estate to the National Trust.



Lord Bristol, who was 44, had flu last week

Obituary, page 23

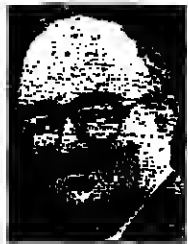
TV & RADIO	27-28
WEATHER	27-28
CROSSWORDS	27-28
LETTERS	27-28
OBITUARIES	27-28
PETER RIDDELL	27-28
ARTS	27-28
CHESS & BRIDGE	27-28
COURT & SOCIAL	27-28
FASHION	27-28
BUSINESS	27-28

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TODAY ON PAGE 20

The opinion formers...
Challenging minds in the changing Times



Peter Riddell

'The challenge for Labour is, can Blair be more like Thatcher?'



Anna Blundy

'In Russia you simply queue up and then get what you're given'



William Rees-Mogg

'The psychological similarities of Cook and Clinton are striking'



An authoritative voice in defence of sanity, and spiked with wit

Libby Purves



An astringent view from the Right, calculated to provoke

Michael Gove

We need 12,000 more nurses, say hospitals

BY IAN MURRAY, HEALTH CORRESPONDENT

THE NHS is short of between 12,000 and 13,000 nurses, according to the Royal College of Nursing.

The shortfall, based on vacancies reported by three quarters of hospitals in England, Wales and Scotland last April, shows a steep rise from the 8,000 figure quoted up to now by the Department of Health. The RCN believes that the figure is even higher.

Recruitment remains extremely difficult but the Government faces having to find double the 15,000 staff it promised to hire during the next three years if it is to bring the NHS up to full nursing strength.

Nurses cost £7 billion out of

the £44 billion spent on the NHS, but the whole service is on the edge of crisis because there is a shortage of nurses on almost every ward in the land. The NHS has a complement of 295,000 nurses, but part-time working means that 370,000 are needed to do all the work.

Recruitment to nursing courses, however, is proving increasingly difficult, with fewer young people apparently attracted by a career of high dedication and relatively low pay.

There is a high and growing drop-out rate from among those who are accepted. Last year 14 per cent of entries discontinued their course, 2 per cent more than in the previous

year. New admissions to the register have fallen by 26 per cent in the past seven years. The number of students in pre-registration nursing education has dropped from 53,500 to 45,500 in the past four years.

Recruits from overseas have become an essential part of staffing and one nurse in six joining the register has come from abroad. Many of the nurses come from developing countries which means that their skills are lost to a place that arguably needs them even more than Britain.

Even so the shortage in Britain is having serious consequences for the entire health service. A survey by the Royal

College of Nursing in early December — before the current crisis — found that 71 per cent of wards reported nursing vacancies, with one in ten wards at least four registered nurses short.

On average there were only three nurses available for the early day shifts on wards with 27 patients and usually a nurse has to look after ten beds. Nurses have had so many duties devolved to them because of the shortage of doctors that they are responsible for the sole care throughout the day of a quarter of all patients.

On the day of the survey one in ten posts was filled by an agency nurse. The RCN calculates that agency and overtime nursing costs the NHS £600 million a year. Agency nurses can earn up to 15 per cent more than inside the NHS and can choose the shifts they want to work. The RCN argues that if their pay claim for parity with teachers were met it would stop the haemorrhage of trained staff and boost recruitment to the necessary levels. The cost would be £12 billion — double the amount spent on agencies and overtime but would bring stability and confidence to the workforce.

After three years training a nurse can expect to earn no more than £12,855 — 17 per cent below the starting rate for a teacher.

If the nurse does stay with the job the highest pay for a post with trust-wide responsibilities is £26,965. In September the Government announced a £1,000 a year bonus for extra responsibility, but this will be available only to 200 working in senior grades.

Leading article, page 21



Tony Blair with Sir David Frost yesterday. The Prime Minister denied he was too far removed from the party's roots

Ministers unveil spending plans in 'relaunch week'

BY ROLAND WATSON
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

CABINET ministers will this week announce a series of policy initiatives as part of an attempt to shift the focus from personalities and to issues.

David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, will today announce that primary school pupils will have an hour-long mathematics lesson every day from September. A further £18 million will go towards extending the summer holiday "revision classes" in literacy and numeracy for below par pupils into the Easter break.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, will unveil £250 million for a strategy to combat burglary, covering more than two million residents in 500 high crime areas. The money will go towards security measures such as closed circuit television.

Alastair Darling, the Social Security Secretary, will announce £80 million for pilot projects to help create a "single gateway" for all claimants entering the benefit system. It is the latest step in requiring all

claimants to turn up for job interviews before being awarded benefits.

The initiatives follow the Prime Minister's assertion during his speech last week in Cape Town last he is prepared to inject an authoritarian streak into his government to achieve necessary reforms.

With MPs returning to Westminster today for the first time since the resignation of Peter Mandelson and Geoffrey Robinson, Tony Blair used an interview with Sir David Frost on BBC1 yesterday to try to allay the fears of some Labour MPs that he was becoming too remote from their concerns.

The Prime Minister made clear that he had been kept up to date with the troubles facing the National Health Service while he was on holiday in the Seychelles and during official government visits to South Africa. "I'm not going to tolerate a health service where people are lying on trolleys waiting for treatment," he said.

He also indicated that he had digested the concerns raised by some senior ministers about his links with the Liberal Demo-

crats. Although he maintained it was "sensible" to explore common ground between the two parties, Mr Blair dismissed the idea of Paddy Ashdown joining the Cabinet. He appeared to dash Liberal Democrat hopes of a referendum on proportional representation before the next election.

Mr Blair said he was "fed up" with facing questions about his relationship with Gordon Brown, insisting it was "as strong as any relationship between any Prime Minister and Chancellor" there's ever been. He conceded that the gossip about personalities in the Government was fuelled from the inside, but he gave it no currency. "Some of the lower-downs twister about a bit," he said.

He insisted that it was the "big picture questions" like health, education and crime that mattered to voters. He said: "I don't say everything in the garden is rosy. There are a lot of problems we've got to sort out. But we are sorting them out." He said that because the Conservatives had not developed criticism on policy issues, the focus was diverted to personalities.

Brown accused over girlfriend's contract

BY MARK INGLEFIELD, POLITICAL REPORTER

AS THE Prime Minister called for an end to the media's thirst for "scandal and gossip" yesterday two of his most senior ministers as well as his press spokesman, Alastair Campbell, found themselves under fire for alleged wrongdoing.

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was accused of breaching the Ministerial Code after it emerged that his political ally and friend, Geoffrey Robinson, the former Paymaster General, had awarded a private £100,000 contract to a company owned by Sarah Macaulay, the Chancellor's girlfriend.

Ms Macaulay's public relations company receives £3,000 a month for arranging promotional events for the *New Statesman*, the left-wing magazine owned by Mr Robinson.

A spokesman for the company, Hobsbawm-Macaulay, said the contract was won fairly by "word of mouth".

But the Tories swiftly demanded that the Prime Minister carry out a full investigation into the deal, which they believe infringes the part of the Ministerial Code that

warns members of the Government to guard against any risk of potential conflicts of interest affecting themselves or their "spouse or partner".

David Heathcoat-Amory, the Tory Treasury spokesman, said: "Gordon Brown and Geoffrey Robinson seem to have driven a coach and horses through the Ministerial Code. Mr Robinson has effectively paid over £100,000 to Mr Brown's partner's company. In return he (Mr Robinson) kept his ministerial job long after his sell-by date. Everybody knows it was Gordon Brown who persuaded the Prime Minister not to sack him."

The second attack was directed at Dr Jack Cunningham.

Heath inquiry

Sir Edward Heath could be investigated by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards for not fully declaring his private business concerns in the House of Commons Register of Members' Interests. The former Prime Minister strongly denies any wrongdoing.

Protesters shut new bypass

THE Newbury bypass was closed yesterday when about 200 environmental protesters split on to the recently opened road and left rocks and manhole covers on the carriage way, police said.

Some marched two miles carrying banners while others ripped rocks from the embankment and dumped them, according to Thames Valley Police. The central reservation was also damaged. One person was arrested for obstruction and further arrests were expected.

The bypass was the scene of one of Britain's most violent environmental demonstrations, with 1,000 people arrested during a passionate campaign against the 100 million project.

About 250 protesters had planned a march and a rally close to the bypass to mark the third anniversary of the clearance programme to prepare for the controversial eight-mile road. But police said that most of them left the official route and spilled on to the road for about two hours.

The police spokesman said the "contempt" shown toward motorists, and a march organizer also criticised the dumping of rocks on the road.

Diana manslaughter charge unlikely

FROM ADAM SAGE IN PARIS

THE French judge investigating the car crash that killed Diana, Princess of Wales, is unlikely to press manslaughter charges in connection with the case, according to French legal sources.

Judge Hervé Stephan is expected to recommend no more than minor charges against three of the paparazzi under investigation. Yesterday a lawyer involved in the case said: "The judge's report will not be completed until later this month, and even after that all the lawyers can

ask him to follow up other lines of inquiry. So there is time for him to change his mind."

But he said M Stephan had indicated that he believed Henri Paul, the driver of the Princess's car, was solely responsible for the accident in August 1997, losing control as a result of drinking and speeding.

The judge is reluctant to press manslaughter charges against any of those under investigation, including nine paparazzi, a dispatch rider, the managers of the Ritz Hotel, which employed M Paul, and the owners of the limousine hire compa-

ny that let the car. There is little evidence to suggest that the photographers who pursued the Princess forced her car off the road, yet there is pressure in France for the 10-month inquiry to end with a public court hearing. Lawyers say the three photographers are likely to be charged with the relatively minor offence of failing to assist a person in danger.

They may also face charges of obstructing the emergency services. Witnesses said that the paparazzi continued to take photographs, blocking policemen and doctors as they attempted to reach the car.

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British hostage reported 'alive and well'

TENSE negotiations continued last night for the release of John Brooke, the kidnapped oil worker, after Yemeni ministers promised Britain they will not use force to resolve the abduction.

Armed tribesmen who fought their way inside a guarded compound to seize Mr Brooke are demanding the release of a comrade accused of murder and sabotage in exchange for Mr Brooke's freedom.

Mohammed Hussein Arab, Yemen's Interior Minister, insisted last night that Mr Brooke was "alive and well". Tribal leaders also assured negotiations sent by the Yemeni government he was being well treated, but warned he would be killed if troops surrounding

Yemen tribesmen demand release of comrade for abducted oilman, writes Daniel McGrory in Aden

their hideout, north of the oil-rich Marib region, attempt a rescue.

While it was feared this latest hostage crisis could drag on for weeks, security chiefs were investigating alleged links between a London mosque and the plot to blow up British targets in Aden on Christmas Day.

In a new development one of the five Britons arrested as part of that plot has allegedly confessed he was paid \$2,000 (£1,600) to bomb the British Consulate, the Anglican

Church and Aden's biggest hotel in simultaneous attacks. Mohsen Ghailan, from London, is also said to have admitted meeting Abu Hassan, the leader of the kidnap gang that abducted 16 western tourists. They are alleged to have had two meetings just hours before secret police rounded up the Britons.

He is also said to have described himself as a mercenary as he told police he was an atheist who came to Yemen for money. Questioned in Aden's central security head-



Brooke kidnapped by armed tribesmen

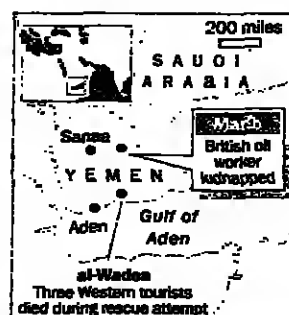
quarters at the weekend the man apparently disclosed links to a London group known as "Ansar Sharia", the Followers of Islamic Law. The

group is headed by Hamza Al Masri, also known as Abu Masri, a prominent Moslem cleric who preaches at the Finsbury Park mosque, north London, and who is known for his extremist views.

Last night in Aden security chiefs were intensifying their search for a 17-year-old Briton, Mohammed Kamel Mustapha, who they wish to speak with in connection with the Christmas Day plot. The teenager, whose passport was allegedly found in a terrorist hideout, is believed to be Al Masri's son. Scotland Yard sources confirmed that the alleged links were under investigation.

If proved, it will seriously embarrass British authorities that such an Islamic terrorist

plot is connected with a London mosque and is using young British followers. The cleric under investigation is known to have raised thousands of pounds over recent years in Britain for extreme Islamic causes abroad and lost both arms in a bombing inci-



dent in the Afghan war. When three of the Britons were arrested, Yemeni officials allegedly found video cassettes in their hotel room which came from a London-based Islamic fundamentalist group which show Islamic terrorists in training camps.

Yemeni authorities are believed to be examining whether any of the five suspects had visited the terrorist camp of Abu Hassan, who days later seized 16 hostages to avenge the foiled Christmas Day plot. Security sources say the bombers drove away from Hassan's camp with a boot full of explosives and weapons, including rocket propelled grenades. The British man who allegedly confessed his part in the plot is said to

have admitted handling TNT explosives. Yemeni authorities say there was "a substantial amount of explosive which would cause a massive loss of life".

The group is said to have picked Aden because of its British colonial past and as it was seen as an easy target. The already strained relations between Whitehall and Sana'a over the handling of the kidnapping in which three Britons and an Australian died were not helped by complaints from some of the Britons held in an Aden detention centre that they have been tortured. MPs should learn more today about the British links to the recent terrorist outrages in Yemen when Robin Cook makes a full statement.

Winter's tale takes its usual twist

FOR some it was a chance to take a walk through beautiful countryside dusted with snow in the first icy spell of 1999. For others it was a time to shiver and wonder what happened to last week's warmer weather.

For the meteorologists it was just business as usual. One said: "We have seen drastic changes in temperature, but it's just standard British weather. It can flip between extremes."

Flurries of snow were reported along Britain's eastern coast. In Leeming, North Yorkshire, residents woke to a covering of 2.3 inches. Temperatures fell as low as -7C (19F) in Glasgow, and -2C (28F) at Heathrow. Much of Northern Ireland was gripped by freezing fog prompting a severe weather warning.

The cold came on the heels of unseasonably mild weather, which saw temperatures in London hit a record high for January of 16C (61F). Martin Airey, a forecaster at the independent PA Weather Centre, said: "It will flip again, becoming very unsettled."

Forecast, page 24



Winter wonderland: hikers enjoying the snow on the moors yesterday near Pickering in North Yorkshire. More is expected to fall over parts of eastern England today

Computer virus has date with destiny

By Nick Nuttall

A COMPUTER virus that "kills" a machine's start-up system is spreading, experts said yesterday.

The rogue electronic code, designed to trigger on April 26 and known as Variant CIH, is spread by people downloading games or buying infected CDs.

The computer's drives appear to turn into life. But the screen is blank and the machine fails to operate. The computer is effectively dead.

Chris Hilder, a network and security consultant at the National Computing Centre in Manchester, pointed to the emergence of several recent computer viruses that push electronic warfare into new realms. Experts fear that these may be test-runs for even more destructive rogue codes. Back Office — a pun on Microsoft's Back Office products — and Net Bus allow a user thousands of miles away to take over someone else's PC keyboard, mouse and other functions.

The viruses also allow someone to hijack the computer's speakers and microphones, allowing them to listen in on private conversations.

Shakespeare theatre site identified

By Norman Hammond, Archaeology Correspondent

THE site of Shakespeare's first theatre may have been pinpointed, not far from London's Liverpool Street Station.

The playhouse, known as the Theatre, was known to be in the Shoreditch area, but Simon Blatherwick has now documented an exact site as part of an English Heritage survey of probably surviving remains of Shakespearean playhouses.

He believes that substantial archaeological remains of the Theatre may survive. "This is a hugely important site," he said. Mr Blatherwick previously co-directed excavation of the Rose, the first such playhouse to be discovered, in Southwark. Before that it had been generally assumed that no remains of Elizabethan playhouses survived.

The Theatre was built in 1576, and several of Shakespeare's plays, including *Richard III* and *Romeo and Juliet*, were first staged there, as well as works by others. Its significance is the greater because in December 1598 the players who owned the building began to take it down. The timbers were shipped over the Thames.

In Southwark they were used to build the Globe, the theatre most associated with Shakespeare's plays — which has been reconstructed under the late Sam Wanamaker's direc-

tion. The Globe's design was based on its precursor, and so the remains of the Theatre have enormous potential. Today the site is occupied by two Victorian structures at the junction of Curtain Road and New Inn Yard. Mr Blatherwick's investigations suggest that the structures do not have cellars deep enough to have destroyed the archaeological deposits.

A wealth of documents exist, mainly from lawsuits between the actors' company and the landlord of the Theatre's site, and also from the construction of the Globe. Several other playhouse sites of the Shakespearean age also have high archaeological potential, the survey suggests. Among them is that of the Hope, which was built in 1613 near the Rose as a theatre and bear-baiting arena, and where Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* was first performed. Nearly two dozen theatre sites have been located, including one near St Paul's Cathedral, where the offices of *The Times* stood for 200 years.

"The probable archaeological survival of so many Elizabethan and Jacobean playhouses means we could be on the brink of a revolution in theatre studies," said Dr Jean Wilson. "We may learn the exact plan of Shakespeare's 'Wooden O'."

Irish told to get their eyes smiling again

By Audrey Magee, Ireland Correspondent

THE Irish will be taught to be friendlier in a £250,000 government campaign intended to improve the country's reputation for hospitality.

Concern has been mounting that the smiling welcome that was once Ireland's trademark has fallen by the wayside as the tourist industry focuses on making as much money as possible from the millions who visit Ireland each year.

Government and tourism agencies plan to offer tuition reminding hoteliers and restaurateurs how to be friendly. The campaign, which is to be completed by the start of summer, follows complaints from visitors that the Irish are noticeably less welcoming than they used to be.

A decade ago visitors to bed-and-breakfast establishments were likely to be greeted with a glass of whiskey and offered a place at the family dinner table. Now the tourist is more likely to be directed to a busy room with tea-making facilities. In place of the traditional Irish "crack" is a short conversation about keys and meal times, and the traveller who once left with a wealth of tales about local life has often become just another number passing through an increasingly busy industry.

"People come to Ireland be-

cause it is friendly and there is a feeling abroad that we need to remind people in the tourism industry of that," said John Brown, of Bord Fáilte, the Irish tourism board.

The number of tourists visiting Ireland doubled to 5 million between 1988 and 1997. The industry predicts that 6 million will arrive this year and 7 million in 2002. Over the next four months workers in the industry will be sent guidance outlining the way in which they should welcome them and deal with their complaints.

Surveys of the visitors have repeatedly shown that they are attracted by the famed warmth and spontaneity of the Irish people. Most say that they enjoyed their holidays, but the Irish Tourist Industry Confederation gave warning this week that the tourism boom risked "prompting an impersonal reaction from the population".

One owner of a B&B in Galway, who declined to be named, said that she doubted the campaign would make much difference. "People want to sit and chat for ages. They are in holiday mode, but we have beds to make, children to attend to and we really don't have time. It's a pity, but it's the way it is."

Cartoon capers force Disney recall

From Giles Whittell in Los Angeles

THE Walt Disney Company has recalled 34 million copies of a cartoon video because two of its 10,000 frames contain unspecified "objectionable" images.

The offending frames in *The Rescuers*, a story about two mice saving a young girl on a riverboat, are visible only to very careful viewers. Each doctored image flashes by in a thirtieth of a second, a spokeswoman said, adding that the recall was necessary for the company "to keep its promise to families that they can trust and rely on the Disney brand". Rumours of sabotage in the studio's

giant animation division have surfaced before, but never been proved. They include some of the more imaginative plot twists in cartoon mythology, including a glimpse of a priest with an erect penis in *The Little Mermaid*, the appearance of the word "sex" in a cloud of dust in *The Lion King*, and an exhortation from Aladdin for "good teenagers" to "take off your clothes".

The claims were first circulated by the American Life League, a fundamentalist Christian group opposed to abortion and to what it saw as Disney's betrayal of its pro-family stance with such policies as health benefits for the partners of gay employees. Sensing the presence of "lat-

day Luddites in the bowels of a corporate giant, *The Washington Post*, among other newspapers, brought the claims to national attention.

Aladdin's apparent naughtiness was traced by *The Wall Street Journal* to two young men, one in Colorado and one in Iowa, claiming to have heard the order to undress. Instead of "Good teenagers, take off your clothes," however, most listeners heard, "Scat good tiger. Take off and go." The supposedly erect member in *The Little Mermaid* is in fact a knobly knee emerging briefly from under a cassock. Disney and its defenders insist.

The presence of the word "sex" anywhere in *The Lion King* remains moot.

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Milton Keynes fulfils Hong Kong dreams

MILTON KEYNES, best known until now for its concrete cows and American-style shopping malls, has become the most popular destination in Britain for people who left Hong Kong after the hand-over to China in 1997.

More than 1,000 families from the former colony have set up home in the Buckinghamshire city after receiving British passports under the British Nationality Act.

Founded in 1967 and set in 30 square miles of landscaped leisure space, Milton Keynes now boasts a Chinese school offering lessons taught in Cantonese every Sunday to the new arrivals and their children, a Chinese church and a Chinese community centre. Some arrivals dream of building a Chinatown in downtown Milton Keynes.

John Wong, an estate agent who was born in the former territory but who has lived in the city for 20 years, says it is no accident that so many Hong Kong Chinese have pitched up in Milton Keynes.

Many were attracted by a promotional video that circulated among Hong Kong estate agents in the run-up to the handover. Produced by the New Homes Group, a consortium of builders and land agents, it portrays a gleaming, functional city with smart family homes and a gridiron of roads in which it was impossible to get lost.

"What appealed to them most is that everything is new

Britain's most modern city is a natural home for ex-colonial migrants, writes Alexandra Frean

and clean. The newness reminds them of Hong Kong," Mr Wong said. A spokeswoman for Milton Keynes Unitary Council agreed: "Milton Keynes attracts people from all of the world because of its international feeling. It is a modern place to be."

With a population of 174,000, the city has plenty of room for growth, she added. As nobody has lived in Milton Keynes for more than 30 years, there is none of the hostility towards new arrivals that tends to arise in older English communities.

Sally Lo, 41, and her husband, Ping, 44, came to Milton Keynes with their children, Kelvin, 15, and Maggie, 9, in August 1997, a month after the handover. The couple, both teachers, were able to buy a detached family house with a garden and a garage for roughly half the price of their small flat in Hong Kong.

Although Mrs Lo reckons that food and utility bills are three times higher in Britain, she believes that the move was

worth it, largely because it has improved her children's quality of life.

"Education here is more creative and children are taught to learn by themselves," she said. "In Hong Kong it is more exam-orientated and highly competitive."

"Our children always seemed to have three to five hours of homework to do. If they couldn't do it all and couldn't catch up, they would lose interest and motivation."

The Los have not started to look for jobs, preferring to spend the first couple of years living off their savings and settling down to a new way of life with their children. They realise that, as English is not their first language, they are unlikely to get professional jobs and may have to settle for factory work.

Such is the case of Henry Leung, 42, who arrived with his family in June 1997. A civil servant in Hong Kong, he works in a clothing warehouse.

His wife, Pauline, 39, had a part-time job with a council-run employment and training scheme for several months, but has given it up to spend more time with their children. Helen, 12, Harry, 10, and Harvey, 8, who attend a Roman Catholic school.

Joseph Lee, a Lutheran pastor and Chinese community leader, who came over from Hong Kong six years ago, is keen to build a Chinatown in Milton Keynes. "If you have several Chinese supermarkets in a row, they can join together to import a container of supplies from Hong Kong or China. A small shop cannot do that on its own," he said.

So far, he has been unable to raise sufficient backing from Chinese businesses to initiate the scheme. He has also met with considerable resistance from most Hong Kong residents in the city, who are more keen to integrate into the native population than to draw attention to themselves.

Mrs Leung voices a familiar opinion: "I don't want a Chinatown. I want to be more like the English, not less."



Barry Cox says: "If I didn't speak and sing Chinese, I'd just be a normal person, nothing special about me"

Stardom beckons the singer with a China syndrome

By RUSSELL JENKINS

BARRY COX carries boxes of frozen dim sum, lettuce and duck in his day job working for a Chinese supermarket. In the evenings, he performs in nightclubs, crooning Hong Kong pop ballads in perfect Cantonese.

A fascination that began with martial-arts films in his youth has led to the 27-year-old white Liverpoolian steeping himself in the Chinese culture, so that he can now write, speak and sing in the notoriously difficult language. His ambition is to become internationally recognised as a Chinese pop star. For now, he is big among audiences of young and middle-aged Chinese women on Merseyside with his repertoire of Canto-pop ballads such as *Kiss Under the Moon* and *Love Once More*, and an original song, *I think I am Chinese. I want to be Chinese*.

"My goal is to make it big in Hong Kong," says Mr Cox, whose girlfriend is a British-born Chinese who does not speak Cantonese. He recently triumphed

over more authentically Chinese competition in a singing contest sponsored by the Chinese Society of Manchester University. The BBC is now filming a profile of the man who is being held up as the latest consequence of cultures migrating around the world.

"If I didn't mix with Chinese and speak Chinese and sing Chinese, what would I be doing now?" he says. "I'd just be a normal person, nothing special about me."

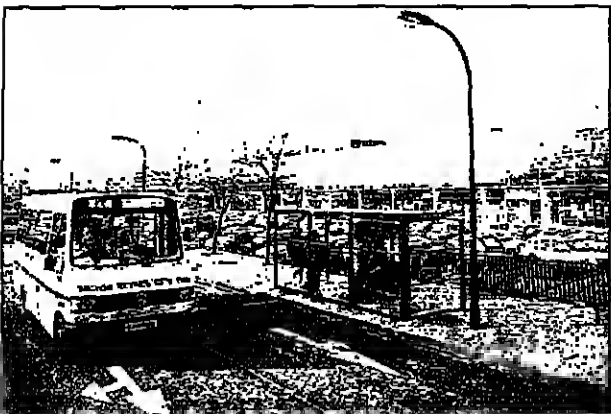
The Chinese community is long established in the port of Liverpool. A childhood friend was Chinese and, as a teenager, Mr Cox experimented with martial arts and had a passion for the soundtracks of Jackie Chan films. He gravitated towards Chinatown. He took Cantonese classes at Liverpool's Chinese community centre, and left his job as a salesman in an electrical store to take jobs that honed his language skills.

A summer in Hong Kong staying with friends completed his education. He plans to return there this summer to

make more progress his singing career. He has given himself a Chinese name, Gok Pak-wing, which means "long life", and says: "Although I know I am not Chinese, I'm trying to put myself into a Chinese body."

His mother, Valerie, said: "At first all this was a surprise to us, but he has always had Chinese friends and, in that way, became very interested in Chinese culture. It has gone from strength to strength. He works hard and people love him. It makes me proud. I know he is going to Hong Kong in the summer. He will stay for a few months and, if anything comes up, he will be staying a lot longer. Good luck to him."

However, she admits that her support does not extend to cooking Szechwan chicken and noodles when he comes in from a day's work. "I don't cook Chinese meals," says Mrs Cox. She is happy to allow her son and his girlfriend free rein in the kitchen. "She can't really understand what he says, which seems a little odd to me."



Milton Keynes's modern streets impress Chinese arrivals

£15m trial for new campaign against speeding

By ARTHUR LEATHLEY
TRANSPORT
CORRESPONDENT

A TWO-YEAR trial of new measures to combat speeding is to be approved by ministers and may be extended throughout the country.

It is hoped that the £15 million campaign, with educational measures as well as tough and conspicuous checks on motorists, will reduce road casualties by a quarter. The scheme, which has been submitted to the Government by Lancashire Constabulary and the county council, is based on a scheme tested in Australia.

Each month, 450,000 vehicles in Lancashire will pass speed checks. Lancashire police say that a 25 per cent reduction in road casualties can be achieved by introducing mobile breath-testing stations, increasing the number of hand-held speed cameras, and television advertising to press home the dangers of speeding. More resources will go to back-up staff enforcing the payment of fixed penalties.

In Victoria, 145 million speed checks were conducted in six years and more than three million speeding tickets issued. The proportion of drivers breaking the speed limit fell from 23 per cent to 1.8 per cent. Vehicles equipped with breath-alysers carried out one million tests each year, drink-related fatal accidents fell by 50 per cent.

Speeding is the main cause of 1,200 road deaths in this country each year. While drink-driving deaths have fallen by more than two-thirds in the past 20 years, the proportion of speed-related fatalities has risen. Transport and Home Office ministers are backing the Lancashire plan, arguing that it might save millions of pounds in medical and other costs related to accidents. Their support comes as ministers institute monitoring of forces across the country to ensure that they are doing enough to combat speeding.

Research commissioned by Lancashire police suggests that if the plan were instituted nationally, 25 million hospitalised days could be freed for routine cases awaiting treatment.

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Mother's brave stand against IRA killers

Republican whose son was shot condemns 'mere thugs'

BY MARTIN FLETCHER, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

MAUREEN KEARNEY, a 65-year-old grandmother, was in a West Belfast shopping centre last week when she spotted the man she blames for the IRA's killing of her son Andrew last July. The man was looking "happy as Larry with a trolley laden full of goods".

Mrs Kearney strode up to him and thrust a photograph of Andrew in his face. He laughed and "something just snapped", she said. She began shouting and accusing the man of murder before a large crowd of astonished onlookers. By the time she was finally led away, shaking and crying, everyone was rooting for her.

Mrs Kearney is a strong, brave woman. Though she is a staunch republican and lives in the heart of the republican Twinbrook estate, with its IRA murals and graffiti, she refuses meekly to accept the IRA's brutal brand of summary justice. At great personal risk she is waging a high-profile campaign to embarrass the IRA and bring her 33-year-old son's killers to trial.

Journalists and television crews from around the world now descend on the tiny living room that she has turned into a virtual shrine. There she explains how the IRA used to be full of idealists fighting to protect the nationalist community and win Irish unity. Now they are mostly locked up, she says, and the new breed are "mere thugs who terrorise their own community in pursuit of money and power".

Those are tough words from a woman whose father fought for the original IRA, whose

brother was one of the first IRA suspects interned in 1971, and who was a cousin of the hunger striker Bobby Sands, but the facts simply support her.

In the first week of this year alone five men were shot by republican or loyalist paramilitaries, ten beaten and at least 14 killed, according to figures released by the Belfast group Families Against Intimidation and Terror.

Last year there were 237 paramilitary beatings or shootings and 149 families or individuals killed. The ceasefire and the Good Friday accord may have stopped the bombs in London, but on Northern Ireland's grim estates the violence continues.

Mrs Kearney's son was one of 55 people killed by terrorists last year — the worst total since 1994. A fearless, outspoken man who lived for football, his "crime" was to pick fights in pubs first with the man accused by his mother and later with the commander of the IRA's North Belfast brigade, who had beaten up a

woman. He knew that he was in trouble. He had received threats. Mrs Kearney contacted a senior IRA man to plead for her son, but was told: "I'm sorry. It's out of my hands." Mr Kearney briefly fled to London, but returned because he had three children living in Belfast.

The IRA came just after midnight on Sunday, July 19. Eight men burst into his eighth-floor flat in North Belfast's New Lodge area as he was cradling his two-week-old daughter.

One man held his girlfriend, Lisa. The rest dragged him into the stairwell and shot him through both knees with a .45 revolver, severing an artery.

Before leaving, the gang cut the telephone wire and jammed the lift doors. Other IRA men were guarding the floors below, and three girls were on hand to take away the weapons. By the time that Lisa could summon help, her partner had bled to death.

The following month Mrs Kearney used her contacts to obtain a meeting with the IRA command staff and demand an explanation. Seven weeks later she received some answers.

"They were very respectful and shamefaced," she said. They apologised for the murder. They said the attack was sanctioned by the commanding officer of the Belfast brigade at the request of the North Belfast commander, but was never meant to end in her son's death. They denied that the lift was jammed, said the telephone was cut simply



Maureen Kearney beside the grave of her son Andrew, who bled to death after being shot by the IRA for picking fights with the wrong men

to ensure the attackers escaped, and claimed that the man who was supposed to call an ambulance forgot. Mrs Kearney accepts none of that.

She is still heartbroken. She removes all the clocks in her house each Saturday so she

does not relive the events of that July night. Knowing her son was killed by her "own people", and merely for revenge, makes it particularly hard to bear, she said.

But she is determined to continue her campaign, despite

the real danger that the IRA will silence her. "They think they are getting away with it, but not as long as I'm alive," she said. Publicly denouncing the IRA was hard — "it's like condemning my own family" — but "I'll carry on to my last

breath, be that by natural or other means". She has five other children and 17 grandchildren, so "there's plenty of us to keep it going".

Few in Mrs Kearney's terrorised community dare to back her publicly, but she says she

is receiving "marvellous support" through letters, telephone calls and people approaching her in the streets. "Most people say, 'Keep on going.' I've not had one person who disagrees with what I've done."

Terror calendar keeps a date with gunmen

BY MARTIN FLETCHER, CHIEF IRELAND CORRESPONDENT

THE IRA has published a calendar showing photographs of terrorists wielding weapons on every page. A Unionist leader said that it sent a chilling new year message to the people of Northern Ireland.

Jeffrey Donaldson, the Ulster Unionist Party MP for Lagan Valley, said that the Republican Resistance Calendar for 1999 was "a sickening reminder of the potential for terror which still exists within the republican movement", despite the Good Friday accord. Ian Paisley Jr, the Democratic Unionist Party's justice spokesman, said that the £10 calendar showed that the IRA was still an organisation of

killers with no thought of peace.

The cover shows a hooded terrorist aiming a gun at the camera. Pictures for other months show terrorists brandishing AK47 assault rifles, loading rocket launchers and adopting a variety of other menacing poses.

A senior republican in West Belfast, who sent copies to friends in Boston, New York and Sydney, said yesterday: "It's a reminder to all nationalists, particularly the younger element, of what we had to live through before the first IRA ceasefire [August 1994]. It might upset some Unionists, but they certainly don't

cause offence to the people in the areas where I live and frequent. The sales have been amazing, and this sort of free publicity is bound to heighten the interest. We've probably got a bestseller on our hands."

Mr Donaldson, who had a relative murdered by the IRA, said: "I suggest that the Secretary of State [Mo Mowlam] should put a copy of this calendar on her wall as a reminder of the need for decommissioning."

"I think the calendar, along with the thinly veiled threats recently issued through *Republican News*, demonstrates that the IRA is still wedded to violence." The IRA said in its



Sales of the calendar suggest it will be a bestseller, says a senior republican in Belfast

newspaper *An Phoblacht* on January 7 that there was "growing frustration" within the republican movement. It accused Unionist leaders of

resurrecting preconditions that caused the collapse of its last ceasefire in 1996.

Unionists said that the IRA was threatening a return to violence unless they dropped

their demand that republicans begin disarming before Sinn Féin joins Northern Ireland's Assembly.

Adams may meet Australian leader

KIM BEAZLEY, Australia's Labor Opposition leader, is willing to meet Gerry Adams next month.

The Sinn Féin president, who was once banned from the country because of the IRA's violence, has been granted a visa to begin an eight-day tour in Sydney on February 15. He will also visit Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne and Perth. Mr Beazley said he would meet Mr Adams if invited to do so.

A spokesman for John Howard, the Prime Minister, said it was uncertain whether he would agree to talks because of Mr Adams's failure to renounce IRA violence. *The Sunday Age* reported.

With David Trimble, the Northern Ireland First Minis-

ter, resisting pressure to set up an executive at Stormont because of the IRA's refusal to begin decommissioning its weapons, the transfer of legislative powers to Belfast is expected to be delayed. The Assembly is due to meet again on January 18.

The IRA has insisted that there will be no disarmament, but British and Irish government demands on the republican leadership to make some sort of move are likely to intensify as Mr Adams prepares to travel to Sydney.

He said: "Like other conflict resolution processes, the international community has played a significant role in consolidating and building on the efforts that are being made to achieve a democratic peace settlement."

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Call for three months of paid parental leave

A NEW campaign group set up at the Government's request to help employees and employers to achieve a better balance between work and family life is threatening to become a major embarrassment to ministers.

At its official launch in London today the National Work-Life Forum, which is backed by voluntary groups and leading employers such as BT, Midland Bank and Lloyds TSB, will call on the Government to ensure that all parents are given three months' paid parental leave when they have a baby or adopt a child.

Parental leave is to be introduced in December, when Britain adopts the European Union's social chapter. Although there are rumours that the Downing Street Policy Unit is considering making one or two weeks of parental leave paid, there is no indication that the entire period will be. A consultation document on the highly contentious issue is expected in the spring.

Battle lines are being drawn between the TUC-backed Paid Parental Leave Campaign,

Campaign group set up by Labour could embarrass minister with its views, reports Alexandra Freen

which has the support of childcare organisations and the think-tank Demos, and the Confederation of British Industry, which has warned the Government that paid parental leave would put an "unsustainable cost on business".

Joanna Foster, chairwoman of the forum, said: "The one brave thing I want the Government to do would be to make parental leave paid. We already know from other countries... that nobody takes it unless it is paid."

Ms Foster, a former chairwoman of the Equal Opportunities Commission, also believes that people should be able to spread out their parental leave over a year, rather than taking it in one block.

According to one model worked out by Demos, under which employees, employers and the state equally share the funding of implementing paid

parental leave, it would cost the Government £300 million a year to introduce. The burden on industry, however, could be up to £2.5 billion. The cost to employers would be the equivalent of an extra 0.22 per cent on their national insurance contributions.

Offsetting these costs would be enormous benefits to companies and individuals in terms of reduced stress and absenteeism. The Institute for Employment Studies has estimated that the annual cost to industry of employees taking time off to care for dependent relatives is £50 million a year.

While the National Work-Life Forum is likely to face considerable government opposition to its proposal on parental leave, it will face less resistance in other areas of its work.

There is now widespread acknowledgement in government and business that the culture of long working hours

puts unbearable pressure on people's health and family lives. In a recent survey, one in four managers said that they would take a pay cut and move into a less punishing job to improve their home lives.

The forum was created on the back of such research after David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, asked BT to support Ms Foster. He said that he wanted her to develop an organisation that would help women and men balance their work and family lives.

Ms Foster is determined now to help to provide practical solutions to the problem and, crucially, to ensure that it is no longer seen simply as a women's issue. "I don't think people have sorted out what role they can play in making things different. We want to help them discover what they can do about it," she said.

The forum's first conference will take place on January 19 in Glasgow. Craig Brown, the coach of the Scotland football team, will explain how he helps his players to balance their work and home lives.



Joanna Foster: "We know from other countries that nobody takes leave unless it is paid"

Man loses leg after motorway accident

A MAN'S right leg was amputated yesterday after it was crushed between two vehicles on the hard shoulder of a motorway. He had also suffered multiple fractures to his left leg in the accident on the M60 in Greater Manchester.

It is understood that the man was trapped against a recovery vehicle after being struck by a car that had careered across the carriageway between junctions 13 and 14 near Swinton. It was not clear whether he was part of the breakdown team.

A spokesman for the Greater Manchester Ambulance Service said that the man was taken to the Hope Hospital at Salford, where surgeons amputated his leg. "There had been a road traffic incident earlier on in the morning and the breakdown vehicle was at the scene removing a car," he said.

Two men who were travelling in the car that left the carriageway sustained slight injuries in the collision, and a third man suffered severe shock. All were taken to the Hope Hospital.

The jail with a wing for the elderly

By RICHARD FORD, HOME CORRESPONDENT

THE number of offenders serving life sentences reached a record of more than 4,000 last year, raising concerns that there could be a rapid increase in the number of elderly prisoners.

Jails in England and Wales currently hold more life prisoners than the other West European states put together, according to a report published today. One wing in a jail has already been converted into a "retirement home" for elderly inmates.

The oldest male prisoner in England and Wales is 87 and is serving a life sentence imposed in 1982 for murder. The oldest woman prisoner is 74 and is serving two months for theft.

The report found that 384 offenders were given life sentences in 1997. The figures were a record and represent an increase of 39 per cent on the average 243 people given life terms annually in the decade 1987 to 1997.

The overall figures in the report by the Prison Reform Trust show that almost 3,000 adult prisoners and young offenders are serving life for murder, more than 140 for manslaughter, more than 220 for rape, and almost 100 for arson.

Stephen Shaw, director of the trust, gave warning that changing patterns of criminal behaviour and sentencing would lead to large increases in the number of prisoners aged over 60 in the 135 jails in England and Wales.

Although many offenders grow out of crime as they mature and settle down, some recent trends suggest that they are remaining involved in criminal "careers" for much longer, and with longer jail sentences being meted out this is changing the age structure of the jail population.

Mr Shaw said: "No other country in Europe has to cope

with such a large life population. We are rapidly following in the footsteps of the United States, where there are growing numbers of 'pensioner prisoners' serving life sentences."

The introduction of mandatory life sentences for anyone convicted a second time of rape or a serious violent offence is likely to add to the trend. Twenty-three prisoners, including Rosemary West and Myra Hindley have also been given a "whole life" sentence, meaning that they are likely to die in jail.

Prison Service statistics show that the proportion of convicted prisoners aged 60 or over rose from 1 per cent in 1990 to 1.7 per cent in 1997, when there were 80 of them. The number of prisoners aged 50 to 59 was 2,370 out of an average population of 60,000.

A wing of Kingston jail, in Portsmouth, has been converted into a unit for elderly lifers. It has ramps, sloping floors and wider corridors for wheelchairs, chairlifts and bath and toilet facilities designed for the elderly and infirm. The wing, which can house 30 men, was established for prisoners who do not require full-time nursing care. "The character was similar to that which might be found in a residential care home, many have served extremely long sentences," an inspection report of the jail said last year.

Mr Shaw said: "Kingston is an old-fashioned Victorian-style prison and one wing has been converted into what is a retirement home for prisoners. It is fitted with the requirements for people who can no longer move around much."

He said the increasing age profile of the prison population would mean that more units would have to be similarly adapted and that this would have cost and staffing implications for the Prison Service.

English judges getting tougher

By FRANCES GIBB, LEGAL CORRESPONDENT

JUDGES from England impose some of the stiffest sentences in Europe, belying their public image of being soft on crime.

A report by the International Comparisons on Criminal Justice found that, on the most serious offences, American judges topped the hard-hitting league. But next came English judges, with those from Belgium, Scotland and Slovakia, who all favoured long sentences. Shorter sentences were favoured by judges from The Netherlands and Denmark.

Where judges had discretion to impose either a relatively short custodial sentence or a non-custodial penalty, Swedish and Dutch judges were readiest to look at alternatives to jail. Where jail was suggested, it was the British judges who suggested the longer sentences.

The findings, to be published by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, which runs the project on International Comparisons in Criminal Justice, are based on two seminars attended by judges from the various countries.

Rob Allen, the association's director of research and development, said: "We carried out a similar exercise two years earlier and there has been some inflation in sentencing in this country." The report would be sent to ministers, he said.

The judges were asked what sentences they would pass in a variety of cases. In one, where a police officer working in the Alien Registration Office had taken bribes over three years in return for permits, British judges were unanimous in considering that a jail sentence of up to three years had to be imposed, while others believed that a six-month term was adequate.

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Delhi vows to curb attacks on Christians

THE Indian Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, visited western India yesterday in an attempt to curb a wave of atrocities against Christians.

Repeated attacks on Christians in Gujarat, the supposedly teetotal home state of Mahatma Gandhi, appear to have been given unofficial patronage by the state government, which is run by the hardline Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The organisation, whose supporters include extremist Hindu nationalists, also heads the coalition federal Government.

In a rare move, President Narayanan, who is an "untouchable", urged Mr Vajpayee in two letters to intervene. Extremist organisations in Gujarat are particularly targeting former Hindus who converted to Christianity. "Untouchables" and low castes sometimes convert to other religions in what is invariably a futile attempt to raise their social status.

Opposition politicians in Delhi have urged President Narayanan to press for the dismissal of the Gujarat state government for failing to protect Christians. H.D. Deve Gowda, a former prime minister, called the atrocities a national shame. "It is not a law and order problem. This is an attack on a religion in an organised way."

Christian tribal members in Gujarat have been the main target, and Mr Vajpayee visited several tribal groups yesterday to try to reassure them that they would be protected. He said that anybody attacking churches would face stern punishment, as would anybody who at-

Local officials said to protect fanatics,

Christopher Thomas writes

tacked Hindu temples in reprisal. Exemplary punishment should be awarded to perpetrators of such crimes, he said in the village of Abwa, where a Hindu group attacked a church last month.

Law and order issues are the responsibility of state governments, unless events move sufficiently out of control to mobilise the army or paramilitary forces. Social workers urged Mr Vajpayee to introduce a ban on all religious conversions.

India's Constitution enshrines

secularism, but the BJP and its more extremist sister parties have increasingly challenged the tradition of religious tolerance. Muslims make up 12 per cent of the population, and Christians and Sikhs are about 2 per cent.

Groups allied with the BJP have attacked churches and Christian schools in Gujarat amid allegations that Christian missionaries persuade poor, illiterate Hindus to convert in return for money or other inducements. The missionaries admit to proselytising tribal Indians, but deny offering money.

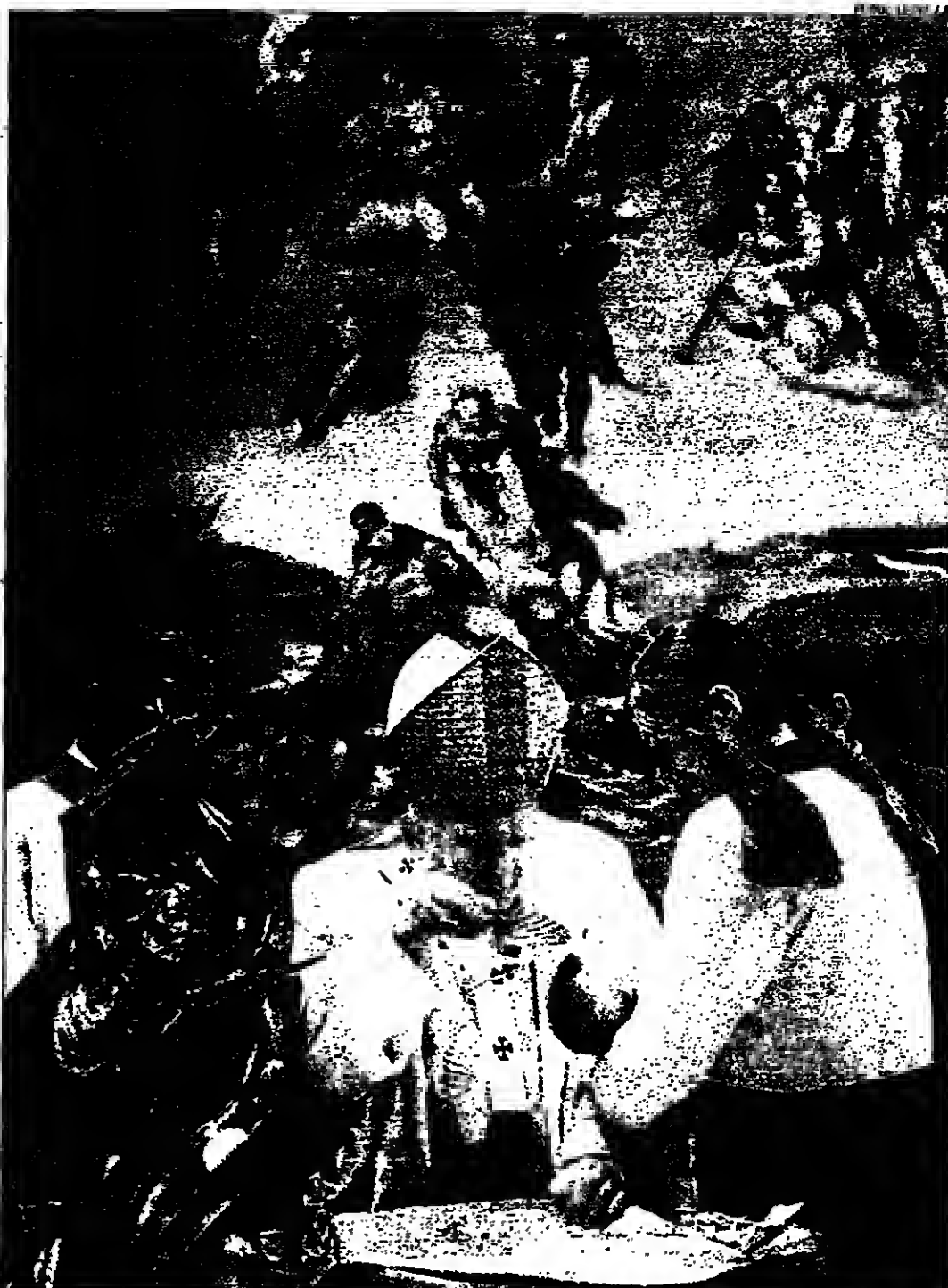
Christian missionaries generally operate in the remotest and poorest regions of India, where they carry out social work and help to improve local infrastructure. This often leads to conversions from Hinduism and, occasionally, Islam.

The Prime Minister's visit to Gujarat will be seen as an attempt by the BJP to tame its more extremist wings. The party came to prominence on a platform of religious extremism, but popular disgust with some of its tactics have led to a decline in support. It suffered humiliating defeats in state elections in November and is seeking to moderate its Hindu nationalist image.

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) is believed to be behind attacks on Christian targets since Christmas in Gujarat. The group is allied to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, an extremist organisation that played a pivotal role in the 1992 destruction of the Babri Mosque in the holy city of Ayodhya, arguing that it occupied the site of a destroyed temple.



Vajpayee told tribal groups they would be protected



The Pope baptises Wiktor Woorowsky in front of Michelangelo's Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel of the Vatican yesterday. The baby was one of 19 to be christened by the pontiff

Nigeria steps up war on Freetown rebels

By MICHAEL BINYON
DIPLOMATIC EDITOR

AS FIGHTING in Sierra Leone intensified at the weekend, Nigeria sent in fresh troops to help the beleaguered intervention force, but rebels ignored African calls for a ceasefire.

Hundreds of soldiers from Nigeria and other West African countries flew to reinforce the Nigerian-led Ecomog force, which was struggling to stem the rebel advance into the centre of the capital, Freetown. Dozens of wounded troops were evacuated to the airport outside the city, where President Kabbah has sought sanctuary.

Two journalists from the Associated Press news organisation were shot and wounded in Freetown yesterday, colleagues in the city said.

Nigerian fighter jets fired rockets into the rebel-held areas on Saturday. But yesterday, despite sporadic shellfire, fighting had died down as the rebels consolidated their hold on the eastern part of Freetown and government forces prepared a counter-attack. The centre was deserted as residents kept indoors, deprived of electricity and water and faced with dwindling food stocks. State radio urged civilians not to go outside. Smoke rose from burning buildings.

African and international attempts to stop the fighting intensified at the weekend, but Sam Bockarie, the leader of the rebel Revolutionary United Front fighting alongside the ousted junta, rejected President Kabbah's call for a ceasefire. He demanded a meeting on neutral territory with Foday Sankoh, the captured rebel leader, who is awaiting execution. Dozens of other rebels and former junta supporters have already been freed after rebel forces overran the central prison.

The Togolese and Ivory Coast foreign ministers set out for Freetown yesterday, hoping to negotiate with the President and Mr Sankoh, who is being held in a secret location.

Britain has sent the frigate HMS Norfolk to monitor the fighting. She is unlikely to intervene. "It's a straightforward precautionary measure to give us a ship available in that part of the world," a Defence Ministry spokesman said. "No decision has been taken yet on what, if anything, to use the Norfolk for."

About 50 Britons are still thought to be in the country, despite Foreign Office advice to leave.

Biko policeman faces murder charge after amnesty refused

FROM SAM KIDNEY
IN JOHANNESBURG

ONE of the alleged killers of Steve Biko, the Black Consciousness leader, has been denied amnesty by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and faces a murder charge.

Gideon Nieuwoudt, then a police sergeant, was denied amnesty because applicants are required to make a

full confession and prove political motivation. He did not admit any crime, George Bizos, the Biko family lawyer said, which disqualified him from clemency.

During the commission hearings into the death in detention 22 years ago of Biko, which sparked international outrage and inspired Lord Attenborough's film *Cry Freedom*, five policemen who applied for amnesty, in-

cluding Nieuwoudt, failed to admit killing the activist. Some acknowledged that he had been chained to a metal grill, one confessed that his head had been "rammed against a wall" but all insisted that he had injured himself in a struggle with them.

Biko died after losing consciousness and being driven more than 750 miles from Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape to Pretoria as a re-

sult of the beatings handed out by Nieuwoudt and the others. He was denied medical attention throughout.

The officers say they tackled the 30-year-old Biko and accidentally slammed his head against a wall. He was then taken in a police car, naked and bleeding, and on the marathon drive lay on a blanket in the back of a Land Rover. He died on September 12, 1977, becoming

one of apartheid's most famed martyrs.

Mdu Lembede, a commission spokesman, confirmed that Nieuwoudt had been denied amnesty. No ruling has been made on the amnesty applications by the four other policemen.

Right-wing whites have accused the commission of conducting a witch-hunt against members of the National Party and the security service

instigated by the ruling African National Congress. But most whites have been shocked by disclosures at commission hearings of the extent and brutality of crimes committed by apartheid's "securocrats".

Nieuwoudt, who retired as a police colonel with a handsome severance package, is currently serving several life sentences for other murders.



Nieuwoudt denied any guilt

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Clinton 'did not father son of ex-prostitute'

FROM BRONWEN MADDOX IN WASHINGTON

DNA tests on the 13-year-old black Arkansas boy rumoured to be President Clinton's illegitimate son have proved negative, according to reports yesterday.

"There was no match. Not even close," says *Time* magazine, quoting an unnamed source at the *Star* magazine, which said it had conducted a form of test.

The magazine paid Bobbie Ann Williams, a former prostitute who has claimed that she had sex with Mr Clinton when he was Governor of Arkansas, for blood samples of her son, Darryl. The magazine is believed to have compared the results with a summary of the FBI analysis of the President's blood in the report by Kenneth Starr, the independent prosecutor.

The rumour, which has dogged Mr Clinton for years, has led to new jokes from stand-up comics that his middle name "Jefferson" is even more appropriate than it seemed. DNA analysis recently established that Thomas Jefferson, the third President and author of the Declaration of Independence, almost certainly fathered a child by one of his slaves.

The rumour is just one of a host of allegations expected to

surface in the next month as a backdrop to the Senate's trial of Mr Clinton.

While senators have tripped over themselves emphasising how keen they are to avoid airing "salacious material", members of Congress are privately braced for another round of claims, from both sides of the impeachment row, providing an unwelcome soundtrack to their debate.

Larry Flynt, publisher of *Hustler* magazine, is expected today to release the names of a dozen-odd members of Congress said to have had adulterous affairs. His tawdry for congressional dirt, which began with full-page press advertisements offering up to \$1 million (£600,000) for information, has already claimed one victim. He helped to expose past affairs by Bob Livingston of Louisiana, who abruptly stood down from his coveted position as the next Speaker of the House.

Republican and Democratic pollsters joined at the weekend to issue a warning that however decorous the Senate trial, due to begin on Wednesday, the scandal could damage Republican prospects in the 2000 elections.

A CBS-New York Times poll found that a quarter of people

who called themselves loyal Republican voters disapprove of the drive to impeach Mr Clinton.

This week threatens to open bitter partisan clashes in the Senate, which ended last week in a warm glow of self-congratulation for thrashing out rules for the start of the trial. Last night, leading senators revealed that the controversy over the important question of whether to call witnesses was still simmering, despite the compromise framework that was agreed on Friday.

Senator Orrin Hatch, chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said that while he could conceive, in theory, of a trial without witnesses, "in all honesty I find it hard". He attacked Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa for calling the prosecution case against the President, assembled by the House of Representatives, "a sham and a pile of dung".

The President himself is clinging doggedly to an unruffled demeanour. He spent Saturday night dining at the Sam & Harry's steakhouse with one of his jurors—California senator Barbara Boxer, who yesterday called for the compromise solution of censure.

William Rees-Mogg, page 20

Great snakes! Tintin the boy hero is 70

FROM ADAM SAGE IN PARIS



Tintin with his faithful companion Snowy in an English translation of *Tintin in the Congo* which originally appeared as a serial in a Brussels newspaper in 1930

TINTIN yesterday celebrated his seventieth birthday amid unanimous agreement in the French-speaking world on his heroic status and fierce debate over his sexuality and politics.

In a display of unashamed neo-colonialism, the Paris media devoted much newspaper and airtime to a portrayal of the Belgian cartoon character as one of their country's favourite sons. All described the "Franco-Belgian" Tintin (he was, in fact, about as French as Donald Duck) as a figure who towered above the 20th century with just one rival in the hall of fame, General Charles de Gaulle.

Yesterday, for example, *Le Journal du Dimanche*, said the adventures of "our young hero" had been translated into 58 languages, selling more than 200 million books, since he was created in Brussels by Hergé, alias Georges Remi, on January 10, 1929. Annual global sales still top one million, and, in France, 44 per cent of households have at least one of his books, the newspaper said.

The daily *Liberation*, was in even more eulogistic mood, with a three-page spread that described Tintin as a cartoon strip so great that it was worth all the others—from Disney to Asterix—put together.

French intellectuals devoted to Tintin studies were in full flow, doing their best to identify with the intrepid reporter. The philosopher, Pierre Assolant, said he was "the absolute symbol of

Europe. I solemnly propose here and now that he features on all euro notes".

But M Assolant was forced to admit that Tintin was "a virgin". He said: "If I was a girl, I wouldn't have wanted to go out with him."

A fuller explanation was provided by Serge Tisseron, author of the erudite tome, *Tintin Under Psychoanalysis*, who said Remi, who died in 1983, was haunted by his father's birth out of wedlock. "Tintin wants to be perfect and does not have any sexuality because he is the descendant of an unmarried mother who was herself a victim of her sexuality."

The reissue of Hergé's first collection, *Tintin in the Soviet Union*, also prompted debate, with politicians and authors arguing over their hero's "sectarian anti-communism". Although the French Communist Party announced last year that it had officially forgiven Tintin for describing the Soviet leadership as a bunch of thugs, some left-wing intellectuals still consider him an enemy.

The issue will be brought into sharp focus next month, when parliament stages a full-scale debate to determine whether Tintin was on the Right or Left of the political spectrum. Didier Quentin, a conservative, will claim that he was a Gaullist, while his Socialist colleague, Jean-Marie Blockeel, will talk about Tintin's anti-colonialist adventures as proof of his left-wing credentials.

Leading article, page 21

Camera-shy celebrities put Sun Valley on the map

IT IS not hard to grasp why Clint Eastwood prefers Sun Valley to Aspen for his winter getaways. Soon after he bought a house here a cub photographer from the local newspaper spotted him on Main Street and took his picture. When the photographer returned to his office, babbling about his scoop, his editor ripped the film from the camera, saying: "That's not how we do things here."

Clint, as the locals unselfconsciously call him, skied and tramped last week in the Sawtooth Mountains with Tom Hanks, Robin Williams, Jamie Lee Curtis and Arnold Schwarzenegger. In Aspen, 600 miles to the southeast, the biggest names were Mariah Carey and Luis Miguel, a pair of B-list pop stars.

Promoted for years as America's ultimate ski resort, Aspen is certainly its most expensive. A one-day lift pass this season costs more than \$60 (£36), and a vacant one-acre residential building site facing the slopes can fetch up to \$10 million. In

Aspen is out, writes Giles Whittell in Sun Valley, Idaho

the heart of the Rockies, it boasts direct commercial flights from Denver and Los Angeles and platoons of paparazzi at the bottom of the chairlifts every Christmas.

Not surprisingly, the real stars have gone elsewhere. Tom Cruise and Oprah Winfrey have mansions in Telluride, but the bolthole of choice for those who like their luxury and privacy in equal portions is this deceptively doxy former mining town in the middle of Idaho, a state best known for its potatoes.

"We don't have a Chanel store in Sun Valley," said a major producer who sold his house in Aspen to buy one here and was in town last week between stints on the sets

of films he is making with Demi Moore and Julia Roberts. "You can't tell anybody by how they're dressed or what they're driving, and if you tried to give a *maitre d'* extra money to get a decent table [a common Aspen tactic], she wouldn't know what you were doing."

Like Aspen, Sun Valley has felt pressures to expand and adopt the pretensions of Manhattan and West Hollywood. Unlike Aspen, it has largely resisted them. To be sure, working-class sushi is flown in daily from Seattle, and there is a fine French restaurant. Thereafter, eating out extends to hot dogs.

For a few days at a time the airstrip at Hailey becomes a parking lot for top-of-the-range Gulfstream jets, but the essential character of Sun Valley is not yet endangered. "The airport can't take anything but very small commercial planes or private ones, and it will never be expanded," one regular explained. Why not? Look what happened to Aspen.

A TRIBUTE TO DIANA PRINCESS OF WALES AND DODI FAYED BY GEORGE BENSON WILL BE AVAILABLE ON CD AND VIDEO FROM 25TH JANUARY.

A specially recorded tribute to Diana Princess of Wales and Dodi Fayed will be available on CD and video from Harrods and leading music stores nationwide from 25th January. The CD (£3.99) and video (£6.49) feature George Benson singing *My Father, My Son and I Will Keep You in My Heart*. The video also includes a conversation between Mohamed Al Fayed and George Benson, who has himself lost three sons in tragic circumstances. Net profits from the sale of the CD and video will go to the New School at West Heath near Sevenoaks in Kent, Diana's former boarding school which offers specialised teaching to traumatised children. (Registered charity no: 297114)

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Iraq threatens to flout 'unjust' UN resolutions

FROM MICHAEL THEODOULOU IN NICOSIA

PRESIDENT Saddam Hussein yesterday gained considerable popular support to deepen the Gulf crisis when Iraq's rubber-stamp parliament urged his Government to reject "unjust" United Nations Security Council resolutions.

It also denounced Kuwait and Saudi Arabia as "traitors to the Arab nation" for allowing their territory to be used for British and American airstrikes against Iraq and demanded compensation from all those involved. But the 250-seat body stopped short of demanding Iraq's two Arab neighbours be punished as some deputies had urged.

But Iraqi officials cast doubt on Baghdad's recognition of a UN resolution demanding the border with Kuwait to be moved to help London and Washington justify their military build-up in the Gulf.

The *HMS Inviolable* is due to arrive at the end of the month and Tony Blair, visiting RAF pilots in Kuwait on Saturday, warned Iraq of punishment for any retaliation against last month's airstrikes.

Tariq Aziz, the Deputy Prime Minister, said Kuwait was "an entity created by Britain to weaken Iraq and deprive it of its historic coasts". He sought to justify Iraq's

1990 invasion of the emirate by repeating claims that Baghdad had been provoked by "economic aggression". Baghdad at the time accused Kuwait of stealing oil during the war between Iraq and Iran and then flooding oil markets to reduce prices and hinder Iraq's reconstruction.

One deputy said the demarcation of the border of Iraq and Kuwait, as defined by Security Council Resolution 833 which Baghdad accepted in 1994, was "savage and illegal". Iraq's parliamentary decisions are not legally binding unless ratified by the ruling Revolutionary Command Council and Saddam. He has often used the body to endorse decisions he has made or is about to make. "He is saying to the international community: if you don't deal with me, this is what will happen," said a senior Arab envoy.

The bellicose rhetoric from Baghdad comes amid a continuing debate over whether Operation Desert Fox strengthened or weakened the Iraqi leader who seems at pains to counter Washington's claims that the airstrikes eroded his grip on power.

He has also been emboldened by revelations that the UN weapons inspectors were infiltrated by American intelligence and has insisted that they can never return to his country. Allied commanders expect more confrontations over the "no-fly" zones.

The implicit new threat against Kuwait will heighten tensions further. Saddam appears convinced that President Clinton could never muster the sort of coalition that his predecessor, George Bush, marshalled in 1990, diplomats said.

However, travellers from Baghdad said many Iraqis were convinced there would be more airstrikes when the Muslim holy month of Ramadan ends later this month.

Saddam's alienation of powerful Arab states, including Egypt, will make it far more difficult for him to capitalise on the divisions in the international community over Iraq that were highlighted by Operation Desert Fox. Iraq's parliament made clear that its strategy was to work with Arab countries to end the sanctions, which it said had "no international basis".

That task will be made far more difficult following Saddam's inflammatory call last week for the Arab masses to revolt against leaders who had not supported his regime in its confrontation with America and Britain.



The Iraqi parliament votes against recognition of UN resolutions deemed harmful

Children 'targets in war zones'

London: Children have become the deliberate targets of war, with hundreds of thousands of them actively involved in fighting and millions of others brutalised and made homeless, according to Amnesty International.

Launching a campaign to pluck children out of war zones, the rights organisation released a report highlighting some of the worst cases of abuse it found. They included children in Sri Lanka and Uganda being forced to kill one another, often dazed with alcohol and drugs. Others were massacred, mutilated, taken into slavery, or had to watch as their parents were killed. The report estimates that 300,000 children are active combatants, and 14 million are refugees. (AFP)

Falklands deal urged

Washington: Britain and Argentina should resolve their dispute over the Falklands, President Clinton has told an Argentine newspaper (Brown Maddox writes). Mr Clinton, who meets President Menem in Washington today, told *Clarín* newspaper that "we have encouraged, and will encourage, these two close friends to get over their differences and reach an agreement in this dispute". Mr Clinton called Señor Menem's visit to Britain late last year "a very positive step".

Scrap turns nasty

Istanbul: Two scrap dealers, who bought a two-tonne block of irradiated metal and tried to break it into pieces at a scrap yard here, have been hospitalised. Eight others who were exposed to the highly radioactive material, were also admitted. Six people have been charged over the deal. Yasar Ozal, of Turkey's Atomic Agency, said the metal apparently contained Cobalt 60, a heavy radioactive isotope used in some cancer therapies, and would be buried in concrete. (AP)

Kazakh poll 'landslide'

Moscow: Nursultan Nazarbayev, 58, right, leader of Kazakhstan since 1991, looked set to win presidential elections with a landslide, after a campaign dismissed as "grossly unfair" by Human Rights Watch (Anna Blundy writes). Mr Nazarbayev's most powerful opponent Akezhan Kazhegeldin, the former Prime Minister, was disqualified on a technicality and elections were called a year early.



'Lucy ancestor' found

Addis Ababa: Fossils of an apparent human ancestor believed to be 5 million years old have been discovered in Ethiopia, according to a national newspaper. Researchers representing 13 countries found the fossils in the Awash Valley, where the 3.2 million-year-old partial skeleton of an early hominid called Lucy, and known scientifically as *Australopithecus afarensis*, was discovered in 1974. (AP)

Baptism of fire

Moscow: A Russian Orthodox priest accidentally set off a grenade after drunken toasts at a baptism in the village of Yaroslavl northeast of Moscow, Tass reported. He had been downing alcohol with the baby's grandmother when he handled the grenade and it went off. Both were injured. (AFP)

Weather forces balloonists to delay lift-off from Outback



FROM ROGER MAYNARD IN SYDNEY

THE latest attempt to fly a balloon around the world non-stop was cancelled at the last minute last night because of brewing thunderstorms.

The joint Australian-American bid to circumnavigate the globe has been dogged by strong winds since Boxing Day, when the flight was originally planned to begin.

Earlier yesterday, the organisers, Team ReMax, confirmed that if the improved weather conditions continued, the balloonists were intending to lift off soon after dawn (8.30pm GMT) from the central Australian town of Alice Springs. But as Sue Gascoigne, the team's spokeswoman, said: "It is a launch attempt, so it's still dependent on the weather."

The two-man crew, Dave

Liniger, an American property tycoon, and John Wallington, the Australian ballooning champion, plan to rise to an altitude of 24 miles, where they hope stratospheric winds will carry them westwards over the southern hemisphere, and set new altitude records. They expect to complete their flight in 16 to 18 days.

Time was running out for the launch because the "weather window", the period of good weather conditions, closes at the end of this month. Frustrated by the delay, the team have had to resort to

sightseeing, swimming and playing cricket to alleviate the boredom. Mr Wallington said they had not lost their good humour, which was all part of the adventure. "It's very exciting to be the first at something and this will be a significant first," he added.

The presence of the 80-strong balloon team, and the long delay, have poured thousands of Australian dollars into the local economy, with hotels and restaurants reporting record business. A launch tomorrow is still a possibility, organisers said.

NET LINKS
www.teamremax.com/balloon - official site of the ReMax project.
www.teamremax.com/news/updates/index.html - links to hundreds of major balloon sites.

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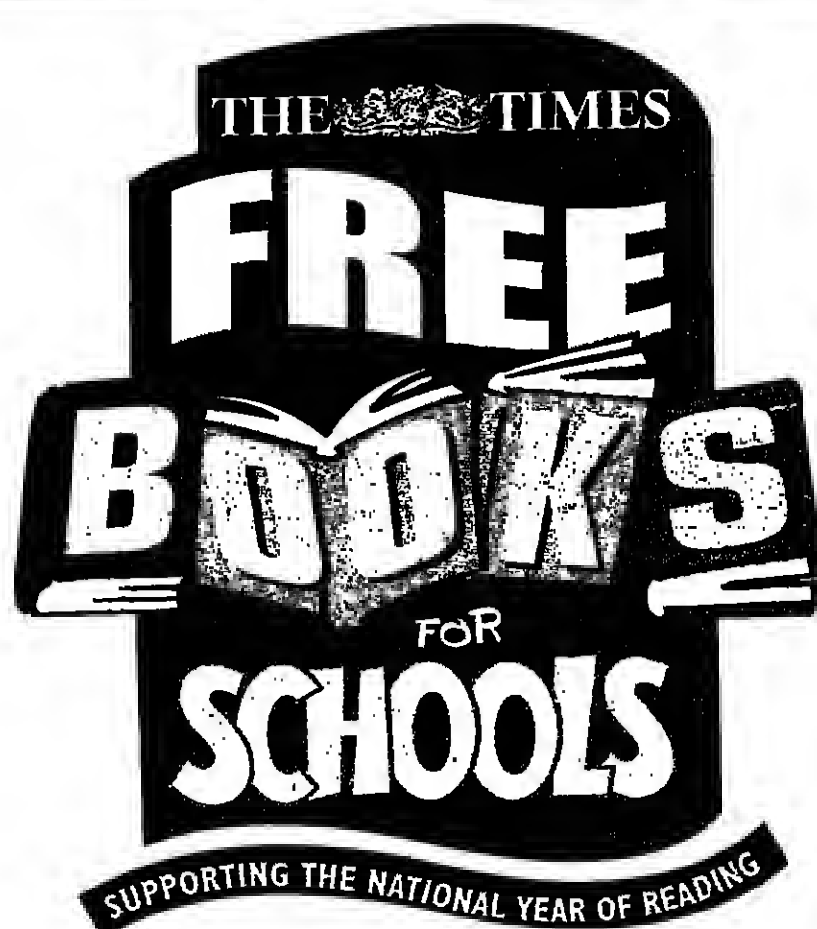
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Schröder under pressure to speed up circulation of the euro

INSIDE GERMANY



BY ROGER BOYES

The euro could be in circulation as early as next year if some German politicians get their way. The successful launch of the currency has encouraged federalist Europeans across the party spectrum to call for an acceleration of the schedule for the introduction of euro-cash.

The overall effect of such a move will be to leave Britain stranded since all the delicate calculations about how, when and if the Government is to recommend entry to European economic and monetary union (EMU) centre in 2002, when euros are supposed to become the coinage of the 11 countries that currently make up euroland.

The push comes from among others, Karl Lamers — the Christian Democrat who was most energetic in setting out the future of a hard-

core Europe — and who continues to shape the European strategy of the Opposition. "People have noticed the magnificent start of the euro," he says. "Now they should have the money in their pockets. The year 2000 would be a symbolic date for starting to use euro notes."

The European Parliament deputy, Elmar Brok, agrees. "The sense of community would be boosted if one could immediately buy a gin and tonic with euros in Majorca."

Werner Hoyer, a former European minister in the Government of Helmut Kohl, wants Gerhard Schröder to urge his euroland counterparts to change the European

treaties and permit the use of euros as a daily transaction currency by the year 2001.

The Schröder Government is listening carefully to these voices. The currency sub-committee of the European Parliament will rule in the autumn whether production capacity and logistics make realistic an early introduction of the euro. The Finance Ministry thinks the three-year transition period is necessary.

Some politicians, such as the shrewd European thinker of the Social Democrats, Norbert Wiecek, understand that early use of euro coins would close some doors for Britain and

Greece. The Schröder team likes the idea of accelerating in at least one European direction, if only to deflect from its almost certain failure to reform the system of European financing or the common agricultural policy during its six-month presidency of the EU.

The motives of the German euro accelerators are clear enough. I do not think there is a devilish German plot to put Britain into dry dock. Herr Lamers knows how slowly political integration will come about, how little can be achieved in this six-month presidency period, and how ordinary Germans will despair of the endless, de-

tailed juggling needed to scratch back even a fraction of Germany's swollen budget contribution. If the euro is suddenly becoming popular, then the Government should fly with it, let it keep interest high, make it the driving force of integration.

But the real motivational element is that the Christian Democratic Opposition, nudged by the Bavarian Christian Social Union, could very easily adopt euro-sceptical postures. The euro is doomed to disappoint. Unemployment in Germany has just edged back over the four million mark. One dismal forecast predicts that the German economy will grow by

only 1.4 per cent next year. The euro is not likely to create a jobs miracle and the mood could well turn sour.

Edmund Stoiber, the Bavarian Prime Minister, is propelling the Opposition towards the Right. He has just played his first card: an attempt to steer the conservative parties into an anti-immigration posture. A nationwide petition is to be drawn up by the opposition parties and will seek support for a move against the government initiative guaranteeing dual citizenship to many foreigners. Herr Stoiber rightly calculates that this is deeply unpopular in Germany. His

second card is to be played next month, ahead of the European elections: a campaign against the European Commission and sideswipes at the euro.

The final card will be played before 2002 — a bid to be the opposition candidate for the chancellorship. Herr Stoiber learnt much from Franz Josef Strauss, who never abandoned his ambitions to lead Germany. The euro and immigration are tailor-made causes for a politician trying to extend his influence. Those calling for the swift introduction of the euro are thus trying to resist the rise of Herr Stoiber and his populist conservatism.

Heads may have to roll in Brussels showdown

FROM CHARLES BRENNER IN BRUSSELS

AT LEAST two European Commissioners — Edith Cresson of France and Mammé Marin of Spain — may be discredited and face serious pressure to resign in the showdown between the European Parliament and Commission.

As Jacques Süsser, the Commission President, faces a censure vote in the Parliament tonight, Britain's Conservative group also wants confidence votes on four other commissioners: Erkki Liikanen (budget); Emma Bonino (humanitarian affairs); Anita Gradin (fraud investigation); and Christos Papouthis (tourism). "Our aim is to throw Euro MPs to pinpoint those Commissioners responsible for the crisis," said James Elles, a British Conservative.

But the picture has been muddled by Pauline Green, the British leader of the Socialist bloc, who has threatened to call for a Socialist vote against the whole Commission if individual censure votes are carried.

Although Mme Cresson and Señor Marin have rejected responsibility for multimillion pound abuses in their administrations there are signs from European Union governments that some commission heads may have to roll. With Kok, the Dutch Prime Minister, said at the weekend that an individual commissioner could not stay in office if a simple majority voted no confidence in him or her.

The French Government is, how-

ever, backing Mme Cresson, a former Prime Minister, who is responsible for EU research spending, one area of alleged abuse. She has also been personally tainted by charges that she gave lucrative posts to an unqualified dentist friend and other close associates. Señor Marin, a Commission veteran with responsibility for huge aid spending, is singled out because of large-scale fraud in programmes under his charge and for alleged nepotism.

Along with the Commission, many MEPs have been taken aback by the ferocity of what many see as

the EU's first trial of strength between its executive and its democratic assembly.

The affair has served to point a searchlight at the culture of complacency which has long coloured the Commission, the authority which acts as the EU's administrator, enforcer and sole proposer of new laws. Highly paid and beyond the reach of national authorities, members of the Commission has long operated in expatriate isolation. While the majority of its 17,000 functionaries are honest and highly motivated civil servants, many of its man-

agers still indulge in practices of cronyism.

The Commission's suspension of Paul van Buitenen, the Dutch auditor who blew the whistle on corruption, is seen as typical of the reflex of cover-up. Mr Santer's defiant rejection of all mismanagement charges last week only served to inflame MEPs' desire to make the Commission more accountable after years of disclosures of lax management in its handling of the £65 billion annual budget. Some senior officials have been appalled at the way that Mr Santer's private office, dominated by Luxembourgers, has panicked and thrown up a defensive wall, compounding the crisis with a high-handed stance towards the Parliament and media.

On the other side, the Parliament is hardly the model of democratic rigour. It has failed to clean up the shady practices, notably the scandalous expenses regime, that have forged its gravy-train image.

The week's events are a test for the European Parliament, which must demonstrate some coherence and avert the confusion that has marked its previous handful of attempts to confront the Commission since 1991. Senior MEPs from the big political groups hope the result will be a bloody nose for the Commission to spur it to accelerate internal reforms and accept a higher level of parliamentary scrutiny.

A CATALOGUE OF ACCUSATIONS

THE Commission is under fire for a string of affairs (Charles Brenner writes). These are the main cases. No commissioners are alleged to have profited personally.

- Humanitarian aid: The Commission admitted last year that between 1993 and 1995 over £400 million in aid spending could not be accounted for; Mammé Marin of Spain was in charge at the time.
- Leonardo da Vinci: Under Edith Cresson of France, this £100 million-a-year youth training programme is alleged to have been mismanaged, with contracts going to suspect agencies.
- Nepotism: The Commission is accused of a culture of patronage

and cronyism. The most glaring scandals involve Mme Cresson.

- Group 4-Securitas: Eight commission staff are under police investigation for alleged corruption over a £10 million contract with the Belgian subsidiary of Group 4.
- Mediterranean aid: Multimillion-pound programme suspended in 1995 after allegations of chaotic administration and abuse. Partially reinstated. Run by Señor Marin.
- Cover-up: Critics say the Commission's fraud investigators are unwilling to pursue cases, and cover up the more damaging findings.
- Tourism: Three people are awaiting trial for alleged bribe-taking for contracts in tourism aid.



Paul van Buitenen, the official suspended as a whistle-blower

Killing of Bosnia suspect is defended

FROM TOM WALKER IN PRISTINA

A BRITISH spokeswoman for the Nato-led Stabilisation Force in Bosnia yesterday defended the actions of French troops who shot a war crimes suspect travelling with five children in his car.

Dragan Gavovic, 38, who was accused of "ethnic cleansing" and rape by the international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, was shot dead in his car on Saturday as he tried to run over a group of French soldiers trying to arrest him. "The driver took the decision not to stop and to aim straight at the SFOR soldiers," Lieutenant Commander Sheena Thomson in Sarajevo said. "They were fully within their mandate. We regret that children's lives were in danger. It was absolutely irresponsible and reckless of Mr Gavovic."

In a separate incident, five staff of the United Nations police mission in Bosnia were assaulted and injured by an angry crowd which surrounded their station after the death of Gavovic, the UN reported.

□ Sarajevo: The Interior Ministry of the Bosnia Muslim-Croat Federation said last night that it had issued a warrant for the arrest of the former Muslim warlord, Fikret Abdic. (Reuters)

Olympic officials 'bribed with sex'

FROM GILES WHITTILL IN LOS ANGELES



Joklik resigned over corruption claims

CASH, skirts, guns, scholarships — and now sex — are at the heart of mounting corruption allegations that have left the future of the Salt Lake City Winter Olympics in doubt and brought the resignations of two top officials, with more heads expected to roll.

City officials who wooed the International Olympic Committee as it considered where to hold the 2002 Winter Games used credit cards to pay for prostitutes for committee members from Africa and Latin America, according to allegations being investigated by the state Governor's office.

"I can confirm there are allegations of prostitution involving IOC members," the spokeswoman for Mike Leavitt, the Governor, said. Mr Leavitt, who has lashed out at the Salt Lake Organising Committee

in recent weeks, said of the sex claim: "It would be enormously disheartening if it were true."

Reports of bribes given to IOC members in the form of guns, skirts, payments of up to \$70,000 (£43,000) and university scholarships worth up to \$400,000 have all turned out to be true. As sex appeared to join the list, the Salt Lake committee's two senior officials, Frank Joklik and Dave Johnson, resigned on Friday.

City officials hope the resignations and the appointment of a new organising committee chairman — possibly Brent Scowcroft, the former White House National Security Adviser — will restore trust in the Games and help to bring in \$250 million still to be raised to meet a target of \$1.45 billion in corporate sponsorship.

The spotlight is on IOC members accused of taking bribes, including Jean-Claude Ganga, the Congo Republic's Minister of Tourism. In return for his vote in 1995, Mr Ganga is said to have received \$70,000 in cash and help with a Utah land deal that last week realised a \$60,000 profit for him.

Mr Ganga has refused to talk to the press. Pressure for him and up to 24 others to resign from the IOC is expected to mount before the committee's next meeting in Lausanne on January 23.

The scandal has caused a wholesale loss of innocence for America's most self-consciously upright city, the capital of a 90 per cent Mormon state where, as *Time* magazine once put it, "all they do is eat, sleep and make money".

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LESSONS IN LONGEVITY



Looking forward to a contented old age: a healthy diet and regular exercise are among the things that each of us can do to extend our lifespan

Time to

AGE TRAP



Last year, on a visit to Budapest, it suddenly struck Tom Kirkwood that he was growing old. "I was standing on the top of a hill on a beautiful clear day, looking across at the Danube," he recalls. "Suddenly I realised I had floaters, little black specks in my field of vision. Here I was, gazing at

this scene of beauty and all I could think of was, 'Golly, my eyesight isn't as good as it used to be, and one day I'm not going to be able to see this, and I'm not going to be able to see the people who mean so much to me'."

Kirkwood, an otherwise fit and trim 47, has more reason than most to be preoccupied by the ageing process. Professor of biological gerontology at Manchester University for the past five years, he is Britain's foremost expert on how and why we grow old.

His theory of ageing — that our bodies are designed to stay in reasonable condition only long enough to reproduce — has become a guiding principle in his field of research.

Yet, as he sets out in his liberating new book *Time of Our Lives*, an extract from which is reprinted opposite, the idea that we are expendable vehicles for reproduction does not necessarily mean that we should fall into decline after our reproductive years are over. Rather, he insists, there is much we can do to give ourselves an excellent quality of life into old age, and to extend lifespan. And just as no athletic record is seen as unbreakable, he thinks there is every chance that we will routinely live into our eighties over the coming decades.

Professor Kirkwood, who read mathematics at Cambridge and decided after graduation that he was more interested in biology, was only 27 when he had, during a bath-time Eureka moment, the "disposable soma" idea for which he is now famous (soma means "body" in Greek). There are two types of cell in the body — those connected with reproduction, and those involved in body maintenance.

There is only a limited pot of chemical energy for these cells to dip into. So there is a trade-off between reproduction and body maintenance. Evolutionary theory tells us that our purpose is to provide fit offspring, so the reproductive cells win in the trade-off. The body needs to be maintained only long enough to reproduce and look after children. Professor Kirkwood likes to think of ageing

as the "interplay between sex and death".

"The theory says that you can't have it all: you can't live forever and produce lots and lots of children," he says. Such an idea, especially from a young, relatively inexperienced biologist, seemed unthinkable. But then, scientists believe we were programmed with a "death gene" and that there was nothing science or medicine could do about ageing.

Professor Kirkwood had serious doubts about that. "Animals in the wild usually starve or are eaten before they have the chance to age, so there is no need for death gene."

The disposable soma theory, which says that ageing is just the accumulation of small biological breakdowns, challenges this fatalism. It has come to dominate gerontology over the last 20 years because it answers the question of why, as well as how, we age.

Moreover, it stands up to experimental scrutiny. Professor Kirkwood and a colleague in The Netherlands completed a landmark study recently which examined family trees among the British aristocracy stretching back to AD740. Men and women with the smallest families, which at that time meant lower fertility levels, generally lived the longest.

The idea that we are not naturally designed to last beyond our reproductive years does not dismay him. "The theory tells us that we age because our genes do not place a high priority on living beyond about 70. But we can



Professor Tom Kirkwood

NEVER TOO OLD:

Most of us can instantly picture the interior of a B&Q superstore — row upon row of paint, hardware, kitchen units, gardening equipment and all the rest. The lighting is harsh and the air reverberates to public announcements and recycled pop music. The essence of suburban, middle-class hell, some might think.

But for many older Britons, B&Q represents salvation — in the shape of jobs, at an age when few other employers are willing to take them on. In 1989, B&Q began recruiting for two new stores — in Macclesfield and Exmouth — to be staffed entirely by over-50s, and was astonished by the response. Two open days drew more than 500 people and there were more than 600 applications for 50 jobs. Nationally, the jobs attracted 7,000 applications.

The experiment worked so well that B&Q decided to recruit over-50s in all its stores. Macclesfield and Exmouth are no longer exclusively run by older staff, but the lessons have been used to good effect. Of 22,000 B&Q employees, about 2,750 — or 13 per cent — are over 50. A quarter of the workforce is over 40. Advantages include lower absenteeism (a problem with younger staff) and the experience which comes with age. As one B&Q shopper comments: "It's like having a friendly neighbour giving you advice." They earn about £4.30 to £5.20 an hour.

Peter Cook, 67, a DIY adviser at B&Q in Wandsworth, southwest London, could hardly be better qualified for the job — he was previously a director of George Wimpey, the housebuilder. Today, well past retirement age, Mr Cook

keeps himself busy (and allows his wife some space at home) giving advice on everything from bricks to garden sheds.

He landed the job four years ago after seeing an ad on a B&Q noticeboard. "I'd been 'retired' and was terribly bored, but I was the height of recession and nobody was interested in me," says the civil engineer who speaks several languages. B&Q was looking for DIY advisers, and the one thing he knew about is building construction.

B&Q's first employee, Reg Hill, 85, works in gardening at the Swinton store. Mr Cook says: "If I had stopped working, I'd be in a box by now, because the very fact that he's working keeps his mind active and it gives him objectives to achieve each day. You don't age against; there's absolutely no question about it."

Mr Cook earns a quarter of his former salary, but he says he doesn't feel that B&Q is exploiting its older workers. Pay is fixed in bands which are the same whether one is 18 or 85. And he believes more older people will be hired in service industries, where they are particularly good at giving advice to the public. But the more physically demanding jobs in manufacturing will mostly be closed to them.

B&Q says that its customers respond well to a mixture of ages and experience. Martin Toogood, the company's UK managing director, says: "More mature employees are likely to have a different perspective on what constitutes good customer service. We often find that they spend more time with customers, helping them with their DIY inquiries." A B&Q spokesman

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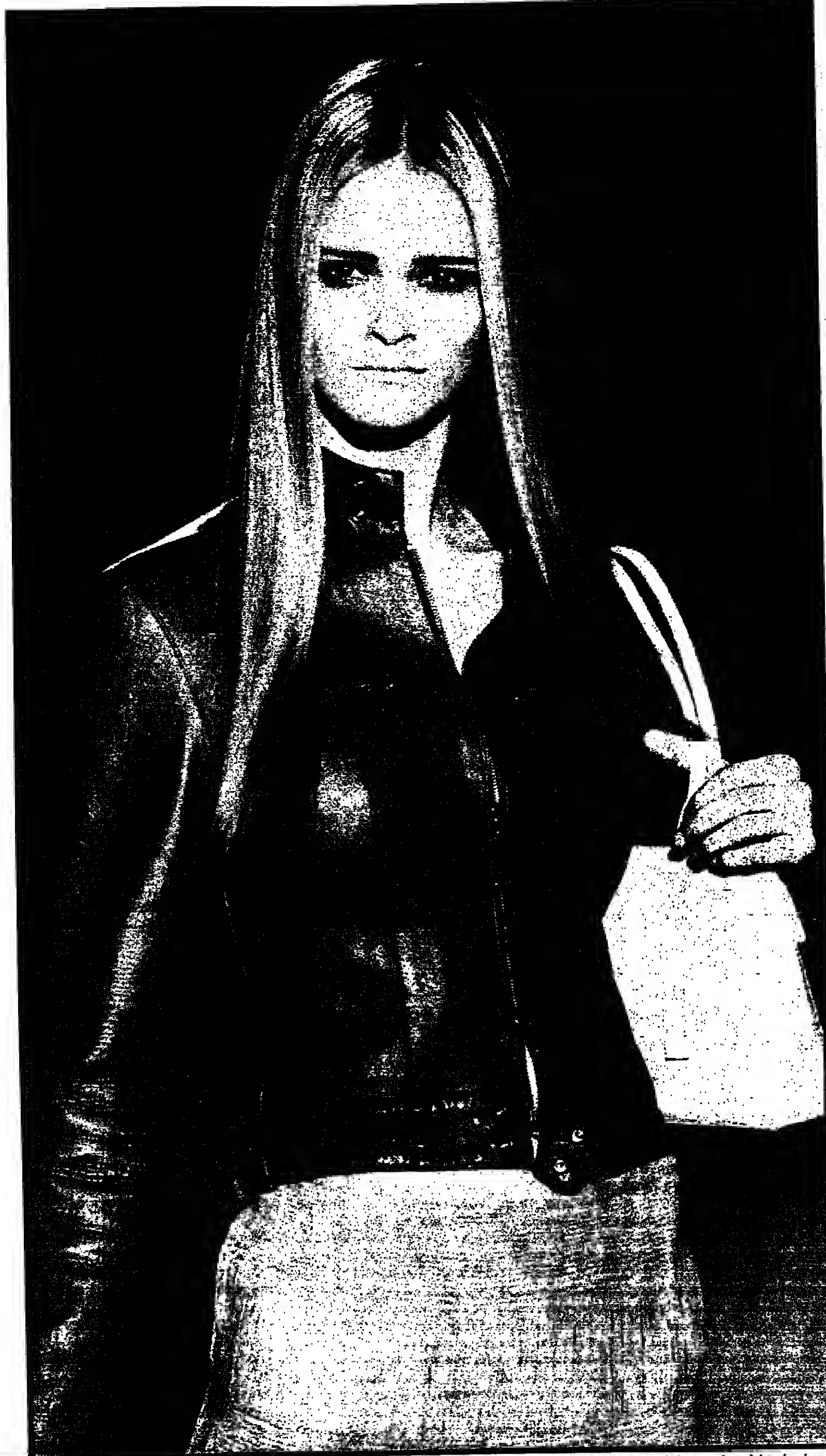
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A LIFE-OR-DEATH DILEMMA

Hippy chick hair is back, that's



Carmen at Gucci exemplifies the 1999 interpretation of long hair: straight, wispy and the result of many hours with a hairdryer and straightening irons

In the immediate excitement that greeted Tom Ford's hippy spring collection for Gucci last October, the models' hair seemed a minor footnote. But hair and make-up are never details in a business where a clever cut at the right moment can make a model's career and launch a million imitations.

Looking back, it was clear that Ford meant his models' hair to be a statement — a very long one. Bone-straight, parted in the middle and apparently untainted by devious kinks of any kind, this was hair as we haven't seen it since. All MacGraw tumbled in the snow with Ryan O'Neal or Cher canoodled with Sonny, hair that signalled — dramatic as it sounds — a new mood.

The following weeks saw more agonised discussions about extensions than the aver-

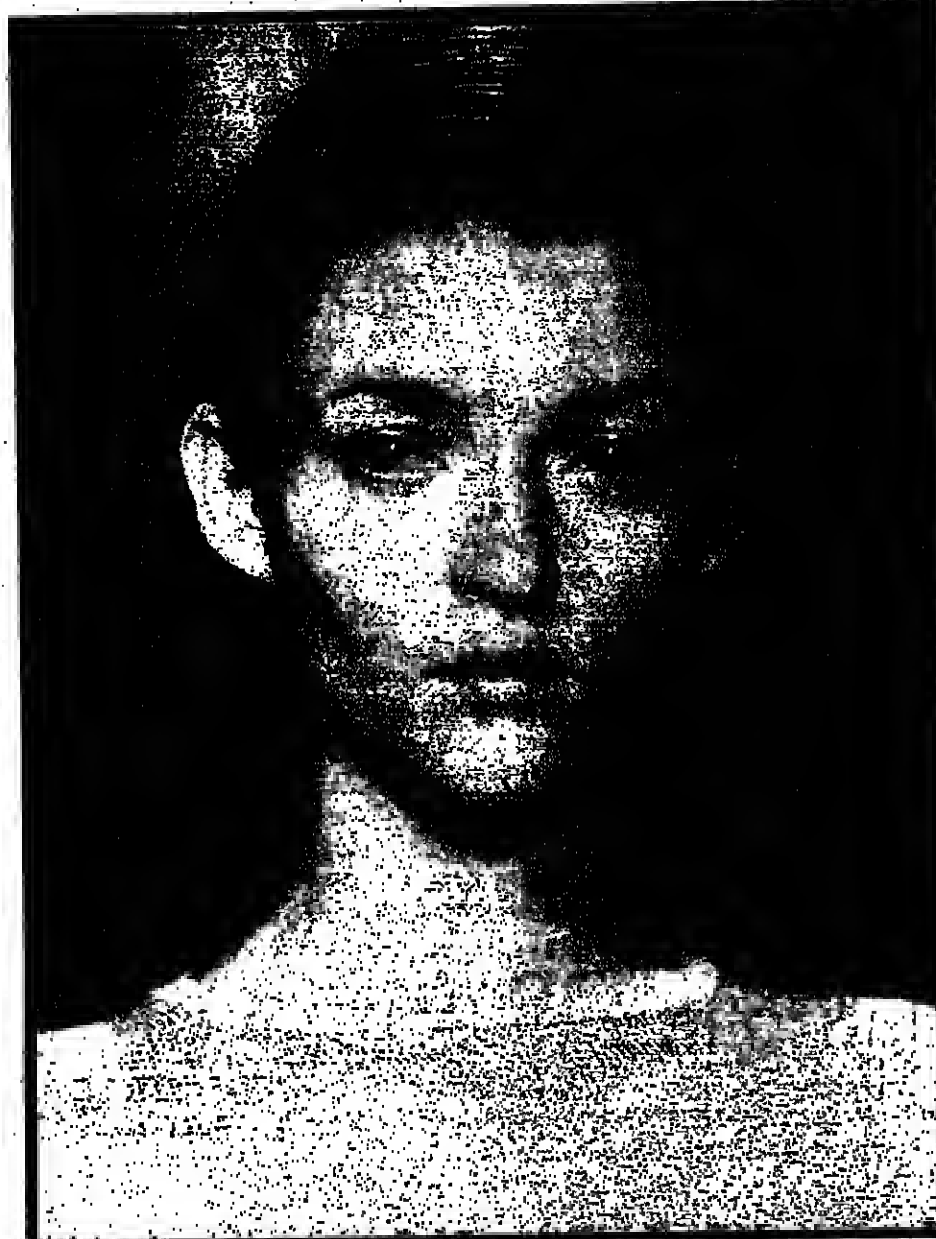
Toss that mane, straighten those curls. Suddenly it's OK to be a Seventies girl again

age town planner has to deal with in a lifetime, for long, straight locks proved ubiquitous. Wave after wave of willowy girls with hair to match floated down the catwalks — neat and glossy as a preppy's loafers at Ralph Lauren; coiled and raggedly seductive as a mermaid at Jean Paul Gaultier; unconstructed and spontaneous (ie, only one-and-a-half hours under the dryer) at TSE and so it went on.

The impact of so much hair after 18 months during which seemingly two thirds of the female population succumbed to some form of Gwyneth Pal-

low pixie crop has been surprising. For one thing, the newness that made short so appealing, so liberating and still, in a strange way, daring, was suddenly thrown into question. The "now" models — Carmen, Audrey, Aurelie, Angela — blessed with conventional prettiness and waist-length manes, strolled down the world's catwalks with their hair flying insouciantly behind them and instantly made all those aggressive, edgy cuts and paintbox dyeing techniques seem tired and overwrought.

That said, women up and



Audrey at Lanvin displays this season's only deviation from the norm — a side parting



Trish Goff does Ali MacGraw at Ralph Lauren; Jean Paul Gaultier prefers mermaids

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Describe your personal style?
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black and slightly Gothic.

What period in fashion do
you love?
Medieval. I love the pageantry
and the heavily embroidered
brocade dresses.

What accessory/
piece of clothing
can you not live
without?
My sunglasses. I
get twitchy without
them.

What are your pet
hates?
I hate people who have loads
of money but no style.

What is the most expensive
item you have ever bought?
An Idol dress at £350. I bought
it when I was pregnant to
wear to the Bafta awards and I

only ever wore it that evening.

What do you think of current
fashion trends?
I love the greys
around now, and
the layered look.

What piece of clothing
would you
most like to get as a
gift?
A black cashmere
poloneck.

What is your fav-
ourite shop?
I love French Connection and
Morgan — brilliant items at
affordable prices.

What is your style motto?
If you wear black you will never
clash.



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■ SPRING PREVIEW

Shakespeare in love ...

ARTS

... and the brilliant
Rufus Sewell as Macbeth

Hot tickets and tips for the top

From *The Pajama Game* to *Parsifal*, from Travolta to Twyla Tharp: *Times* critics offer a selective guide to the delights of the spring season

FILM: JAMES CHRISTOPHER

America goes to war again in the epic *The Thin Red Line*Kate Winslet, sticking to dry land in *Hideous Kinky*

BUCKLE your seat-belts. It's going to be a rough ride for anyone hoping for a quiet life in the stalls between now and April. The big movies are awash with environmental scandal, vertiginous romances, family dysfunction, political ignominy, and enough whimsy to blow Richard Branson to Mars.

First over the edge is Warren Beatty in his own film, *Bulworth* (released Jan 22). Playing a US Senator whose polls are sinking in a mud-slinging election, Beatty's Bulworth has a nervous breakdown, hires a hit man to kill him, and suddenly discovers a kamikaze freedom to tell unspeakable home truths to a bemused nation. Political mendacity is all the rage. Look at John Travolta. Having cultivated a taste for dirt in *Primary Colors*, he plays a lawyer who pursues his career on the line in Steven Zaillian's *A Civil Action* (March 5). The sting here is that the story is true. Toxic chemicals dumped in the water supply of a small town near Boston have had tragic results. Talk of Oscars is coloured by talk of writs.

Family skeletons are taken in hand by Oprah Winfrey in Jonathan Demme's *Beloved* (March 5), written by Toni Morrison. Winfrey plays a struggling slave in rural Ohio, 1873, whose relationship with her daughter (Kimberly Elise) is threatened by the uneasy adoption of Thandie Newton's charismatic *Beloved*. Sibling rivalry also infects Anand Tucker's intriguing biopic *Hilary and Jackie* (Jan 22). Here Emily Watson's genius cellist and sister-from-hell, Jacqueline du Pré, systematically puts her older sister (Rachel Griffiths) in the shade.

This is as nothing to the comic mayhem caused by the glamorous pairing of Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman in Griffin Dunne's *Practical Magic* (Jan 22). Inheriting witching powers, these two sisters cast *Viagra*-strength spells on men. Kathy Bates reprises some of the mad obsession of *Misery* in Frank Coraci's rites-of-passage tale, *The Waterboy* (April 30). In *Hideous Kinky* (Feb 5) Kate Winslet plays a single mum who takes her young daughters to Morocco in search of the meaning of life. In her first film since *Titanic*, she discovers that freedom and motherhood come at a price.

Terence Malick finally comes out of hiding to direct *The Thin Red Line* (March 5), an epic that promises to be one of the events of the year. This idiosyncratic view of the Second World War battle for Guadalcanal stars Sean Penn, Nick Nolte, Woody Harrelson and John Cusack.

On the period front, there is nothing to equal the glittering cast of John Madden's *Shakespeare in Love* (Jan 29). Joseph Fiennes plays the penniless, adulterous Bard who falls for Gwyneth Paltrow's Viola while he is writing *Romeo and Juliet*. The other towering romance of the season pairs Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan in Nora Ephron's seamless feel-good movie, *You've Got Mail* (Feb 26), an Internet version of *Pride and Prejudice* with Hanks as a business shark making a mess of e-mailing Ryan's old-fashioned shopkeeper.

Gwyneth Paltrow busy catching the Bard's eye in the movie *Shakespeare in Love*. John Madden's glittering period piece with a cast including Joseph Fiennes, Judi Dench and Antony Sher

THEATRE: BENEDICT NIGHTINGALE

SPACEY. Binoche. Nesson. Kidman. Keach. McGregor: 1998 was the year when the silver screen came spilling on to the London stage, bringing glamour and even quality with it. Can 1999 match it? Maybe. With Cate Blanchett, Richard Dreyfuss, Rufus Sewell and Klaus Maria Brandauer all slated for London before the bluebells have replaced the primroses, the early signs are not discouraging.

Brandauer brings his directing as well as his formidable acting skills to a play about Hitler's pet architect, Esther Vilars' *Speer*, at the Almeida on March 9; Blanchett takes one of the great modern roles, the disillusioned ex-spy Susan Traverne, in David Hare's *Pleasant* at the Islington theatre's West End home, the Albany, on April 27. The brilliant Sewell plays Macbeth opposite Sally Dexter at the Queen's on March 3.

Dreyfuss surfaces at the Haymarket on March 17 in a staging of Neil Simon's raw comedy of domestic disasters, *The Prisoner of Second Avenue*. And spring should also bring the West End the admirable Geraldine McEwan in a major contribution to the Coward centenary, Hay Fever; Rachel Weisz in Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer*; and Mamma Mia! which brings Abba's music to a show about a wedding.

Rufus Sewell for *Macbeth*

At the National Theatre you will find Trevor Nunn and John Caird's revival of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* (March 15), plus a rare staging of Bernstein's *Candide* (April 13), and a visit by Dublin's Abbey in Boucicault's melodramatic *Colleen Bawn* (March 18). The RSC continues transferring last year's Stratford

season to the Barbican Centre and the Young Vic — watch especially for C.S. Lewis's *Lion, Witch and Wardrobe* (March 18), Sher in *The Winter's Tale* (March 25) and Bernard-Marie Koltès's weird study of urban violence, *Roberto Zucco* (April 7) — and is pretty busy in Warwickshire too. Myself, I look forward with more than usual enthusiasm to seeing Josette Simon's *Titania* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (March 25), Ray Fearon and Richard McCabe in *Othello* (April 21) and, at the Swan on April 22, Tim Supple's staging of Ted Hughes's *Tales from Ovid*.

What else catches the eye? In London, C.P. Taylor's shrewd tale of the Nazification of a decent man, *Good (Donmar, March 23)*, and the hugely controversial *Le Cid* that Declan Donnellan staged in Avignon last year (Riverside, Feb 16). Out of town, McKellen's *Prospero* in the West Yorkshire Playhouse's *Tempest* (Feb 2); Peter Bowles in a Mobil tour of Anthony Shaffer's *Slender*; Fay Weldon's *The Four Alix Bakers*, plus previews of Simon Callow's revival of *The Pajama Game* (Birmingham Rep, Feb 23 and April 23); David Threlfall in *Peer Gynt* (Royal Exchange, Manchester, Feb 11); and Prunella Scales and Timothy West touring in Pinter's *Birthday Party*, opening at Salisbury Playhouse on February 18.

OPERA: RODNEY MILNES

The Royal Opera's delightful *Paul Bunyan* is revived

OPERA in London might have been a little thin on the ground following the Royal Opera's slash'n'burn cancellation of its entire season, but something has been salvaged in the restoration of Francesco Zambello's delightful production of Britten's *American* opera, *Paul Bunyan*, which opens for a run at Sadler's Wells on April 23.

ENO is making the most of the gap: a new production of *Parsifal* conducted by Mark Elder, directed by Nikolaus Lehnhoff and with a cast headed by Kim Begley, Kathryn Harries and Gwynne Howell (Feb 13); Bolto's *Medistofele* in a new staging by Ian Judge (March 18); and a "controversial" production of Handel's *Semele* by Robert Carsen, conducted by Harry Bicket (April 19). There are high hopes for Raymond Gubbay's Albert Hall *Tosca*, staged by the same team as last year's outstanding *Butterfly* — David Freeman, David Roger, Peter Robinson — and with Susan Bullock and Suzanne Murphy sharing the title role (from Feb 18). Those with a nose for the out-of-the-ordinary will relish a mini-Tchaikovsky festival: the Guildhall School is performing *The Tsarina's Slippers*, his magical setting of Gogol's *Christmas Eve* (March 2), and University College Opera will mount *Mazeppa* at the Bloomsbury on March 22. On March 31 Broomhill Opera will stage Weill's *Silbersee* in its new east London home, Wilton's Music Hall, in a translation by Rory Bremner.

Both the Welsh National and Scottish Opera are leading from strength. In Car-

diff, Peter Stein's new production of Peter Grimes, conducted by Carlo Rizzi, opens February 15 with John Daskin in the title role. Richard Jones's staging of *Hansel and Gretel*, so far performed only twice but seen by millions on TV, comes back into the Welsh repertoire (Feb 26), joined by the late Göran Järvelid's popular version of *La Bohème* (Feb 25).

In Glasgow there's a hugely inviting new production of *Der Rosenkavalier*, conducted by Richard Armstrong, directed by David McVicar, and with Joan Rodgers and Peter Rose as the antagonists (Feb 6), and Armstrong is also in charge of the first performance in these islands of Delius's *The Magic Fountains*, a characteristically exotic fantasy set amid the Indians of Florida (Feb 20) — two not-to-be-missed shows.

From next Friday Opera North will revive and tour Martin Duncan's production of Rossini's *Thieving Magpie*, with Mary Hegarty as the heroine, and on April 27 the company revives Simon Holt's *Lorca* opera, *The Nightingale's to Blame*, premiered last year in Huddersfield — a worthy piece difficult to bring off. And don't forget English Touring Opera, currently on a high: its spring tour is launched with Robert Chevara's new production of *Macbeth* at the Cambridge Arts Theatre on February 24.

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Monet fever at
the Royal Academy ...

Pollock for your pleasure

VISUAL ART: RICHARD CORK

TO JUDGE by the stampede to buy advance tickets, Monet in the 20th Century at the Royal Academy is set to become the new year's most popular art show (Jan 23-April 18). Impressionism remains its overwhelming popularity, and Monet is the most loved member of the movement. The British fascination with gardens provides another reason why this exhibition might well be an all-time record-breaker — for the survey concentrates on his later years, when Monet grew obsessed with painting the flowerbeds, water-lilies and weeping willows he had planted at his home in Giverny.

A far more severe and classical French painter is reassessed in the National Gallery's *Portraits by Ingres* exhibition (Jan 27-April 25). But the show should be a revelation. Long neglected, especially by those who compared him unfavourably with his arch-rival Delacroix, Ingres is a supreme portraitist. Equally at ease with men and women, he is a master of design. But he can be deeply sensual as well, and his inventive originality ensured that he later found devotees even among Modernists as revolutionary as Picasso.

Living artists will not be neglected in the months ahead. Andreas Gursky, one of the most brilliant and unsettling photographers at work today, will be examined at the Serpentine Gallery

(Jan 21-March 7). Steve McQueen, among the most impressive of young British artists, is having his first major British show of films and sculpture at the ICA (Jan 29-March 21). Yinka Shonibare, a witty and subversive contributor to the *Sensation* exhibition, receives a substantial airing at the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham (Feb 10-April 5). And Richard Deacon, an outstanding middle-generation sculptor, is celebrated by the Tate Gallery Liverpool in a show of recent work never before seen in Britain (Feb 20-May 16).

Patrick Caulfield, among the finest and most consistently rewarding of our senior painters, will emblazon the Hayward Gallery with a much-deserved retrospective (Feb 4-April 11). Ranging over the whole of his tenacious 40-year career, the Caulfield show could easily win his cool explorations of urban interiors an even wider range of admirers.

Yet another facet of Picasso's seemingly limitless achievements will be revealed at the Barbican Art Gallery (Jan 29-March 28). Since he was fascinated by the camera's possibilities, and left behind more than 17,000 photographic works, it is surprising that no show has fully investigated his contribution to photography until now. The Barbican rectifies this omission and promises to offer a host of fresh insights into his inexhaustible creative process.



An untitled 1945 work by Jackson Pollock. The Tate Gallery's large retrospective of painting by "Jack the Dripper" is likely to be the most explosive show of the season

The most explosive show of the season, though, will surely be Jackson Pollock at the Tate Gallery (March 11-June 6). Despite his legendary reputation as the hard-drinking, short-lived innovator of dripped and spattered paint, Pollock has not been seen at full stretch in Britain for more than 40

years. So this survey, the sole European airing for the major retrospective recently displayed at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, might generate high excitement. Spectacular loans from across the world will ensure that "Jack the Dripper" is seen at his wild, organic best. Not to be missed.

■ **SPRING PREVIEW**
... and a dancing Don Juan

DANCE: DEBRA CRAINE

NOW no longer a full-time member of the Royal Ballet, Irek Mukhammedov stars in a new touring production for Arc Dance Company by Kim Brandstrup, *The Return of Don Juan* (March 1, Sadler's Wells). Mukhammedov plays the infamous philanderer, catapulted out of Hell and into a modern-day film studio where he is on a mission to seduce the last unseduced woman on earth. The Danish composer Kim Helweg provides an original score.

The Royal Ballet is preparing for its annual Dance Bites tour which this year features new works by Mark Baldwin, Michael Corder, Cathy Marston and William Tuckett. Two simultaneous tours open on March 1, one in Darlington (Civic Theatre), the other in Bath (Theatre Royal). As its contribution to the Towards the Millennium festival, Birmingham Royal Ballet performs a triple bill (Sadler's Wells Feb 10, Birmingham Hippodrome March 3) which celebrates the Eighties.

The programme brings together David Bintley's *Choros*, inspired by Ancient Greek dances, and his *Still Life at the Penguin Café*, a "veritable ecological extravaganza", with Twyla Tharp's exhilarating *In the Upper Room*. Performed by dancers in trainers and pointe shoes, this American masterpiece of momentum and energy is set to Philip Glass's popular minimalist score.

German dancer Pina Bausch returns to London for the first time in 17 years when she brings her Tanztheater Wuppertal to Sadler's Wells (Jan 27). She presents *Viktor*, an emotional roller-coaster of dance-theatre performed in front of a 24-foot cartwheel. Sadler's Wells plays host to another foreign visitor when Pacific Northwest Ballet from Seattle comes to London (Feb 22-27) with Balanchine's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and a mixed bill of US choreographers.

When Derek Deane staged *Romeo and Juliet* in the round at the Albert Hall in



Irek Mukhammedov will star in a new touring ballet by Kim Brandstrup about Don Juan

June 1998 he went to town, utilising more than 120 performers. He is now reviving that production for English National Ballet's spring tour, downscaling it for a company of 64. It opens at the Mayflower, Southampton (March 1-6) before moving to Manchester (Palace, March 8) and Oxford (Apollo, March 15).

Northern Ballet Theatre unveils its new full-length *Carmen* at the Grand in

Leeds on February 22. Choreographed by Didi Veldman, and based on a scenario by the late Christopher Gable, it sets the familiar tale in the "dark underworld of contemporary Latin America".

MUSIC: RICHARD MORRISON

THE eternal quest for street cred leads orchestras into dangerous liaisons this spring. The London Philharmonic presents a day of "Roots/Classical Fusions" (Festival Hall, Feb 6), when it collaborates with an African choir, an early-music group and a Turkish folk flautist. In Manchester the Halle Orchestra also walks on the (slightly) wild side, premiering Errollyn Wallen's saxophone concerto for Courtney Pine (Bridgewater Hall, March 25). And even the period-instrument Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment takes part in a wacky venture (Barbican, April 6) in which the radical American theatre director Peter Sellers will apparently "breathe new life" into three Bach cantatas. What larks.

Elsewhere, there are birthday bashes. André Previn celebrates his 70th (yes, even whizzkids grow wrinkly) by returning to his old LSO mates for three concerts (Barbican, March 7-15). An even greater figure, Goedicke, has his 250th birthday marked by the fine Corydon Singers (St John's Smith Square, Jan 22) and by a weekend of "Goedicke's Matinee" (South Bank in London).

Galina Ustvolskaya, the mysterious Russian composer admired (and, it is said,



Rostropovich: triple echo

proposed to) by Shostakovich, comes out of the cold when the Royal Academy of Music in London mounts a festival (Jan 26-29) celebrating her 80th birthday. At last we can judge whether her talent justifies the claims made on her behalf. And Olivier Messiaen's widow, Yvonne Loriod, takes part in the BBC Symphony Orchestra's festival (Barbican, this weekend) devoted to the Frenchman's exotic and ecstatic paeans.

The University of Cambridge, meanwhile, hangs

out the hunting for Alexander Goehr, who retires as professor of music after 23 years. A festival throughout the spring term features his music and that of his many distinguished pupils. And the Lahti Symphony Orchestra from Finland makes its UK debut with a fascinating Sibelius weekend (Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Feb 27-28), including the British premiere of his Violin Concerto in its original version.

Finally, two epic and an oddity. Simon Rattle's ten-year *Towards the Millennium* project reaches the 1980s, which means loads of Lutoslawski and Birtwistle, as well as another outing for the longest continuous orchestral piece in history: Nicholas Maw's 90-minute *Odyssey* (Birmingham and London, throughout March). Mstislav Rostropovich revives memories of prodigious deeds of yore when he plays no fewer than three solo works with the LSO in one sitting, including a new Sofia Gubaidulina piece (this Wednesday, Barbican). And, for music-lovers who think they have heard it all, the "world premiere concert programme" on a left-handed piano takes place at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on February 11. A sinister development you might say.

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THE BATTERED BRIDE
New

Blairism at a turning point

Tony Blair wants us to judge him and his Government on performance, not personalities. Fair enough. That is probably how voters will anyway judge him in two to three years, when recent lurid headlines will have been long forgotten. But Mr Blair's test is much more demanding than it appears. The main doubt about new Labour has always been its ability to deliver in office.

Of course, claims (exaggerated or real) about Cabinet infighting, about spin-doctors and about the private lives of ministers are damaging. Mr Blair has to be careful, not least in keeping a public distance for some time from Peter Mandelson, in both their interests. But the significance of these feverish stories is vastly exaggerated. The Tories understandably see an opportunity to get their own back for many unfair and over-the-top criticisms they suffered. But such allegations do not decide the fate of governments.

The striking feature of the latest polls is how little impact the Mandelson affair has had on public opinion, not how much. The ratings of Mr Blair and Labour are still much higher than at the last election, and higher than for any previous government after 20 months in office. Moreover, any movement has been from Labour to the Liberal Democrats, rather than to the Tories. This suggests a mini-protest, rather than any fundamental shift in opinion.

Mr Blair obviously has to demonstrate that the Government has not lost its way and that his senior colleagues can work together. That should be relatively straightforward in the short term. The Cabinet is broadly agreed on the thrust of policy. No one serious is arguing for a change of approach, least of all John Prescott. A batch of new (and reheated) initiatives last week on numeracy in schools, fighting burglary and employment is intended to show the new Labour character of the Government.

The key question is about delivery. New Labour's main flaw has been its lack of rigour on policy making. Pre-election caution, to avoid charges of higher spending and taxes, meant that there was not enough serious thought about how to improve services. Instead, there were the five pledges. As Philip Gould reveals in *The Unfinished Revolution*, these were essentially campaigning devices which emerged from testing by focus groups of swing voters. However effective in electoral terms, the more specific ones, on NHS waiting lists and class sizes, were misguided. Almost no one except Frank Dobson and a couple of Blairite advisers believes the pledge on waiting lists is good health policy. It has distorted the allocation of resources, and along with serious weaknesses in nurse training and retention inherited from the Tories, has contributed to serious problems in hospitals. But the pledge has to be achieved, or modified.

In other areas, the Government has had to recognise that it will have to challenge vested — and often Labour-supporting — interests if it is to deliver improved services. I wonder how many Labour MPs understand or accept the implications of Mr Blair's remark

yesterday in his *Breakfast With Frost* interview that neither teaching unions nor local education authorities could be allowed to decide education policy. That was reflected in David Blunkett's announcement on Friday about intervening to hand over the running of schools to failing local authorities to outsiders, including private-sector bodies. While there are obvious dangers of excessive centralisation, the Government is likely to have to go further with the new round of education action zones and in allowing more competition locally in setting up schools.

These initiatives require a sufficient number of ministers committed to a new Labour approach. For all Mr Blair's claims that the recent reshuffle promoted new Labour supporters, questions remain about how many are really willing to take political risks. Mr Mandelson mattered not just because of his closeness to Mr Blair but also because of his rare willingness to use new Labour language about business and free markets. That is why there was such glee over his resignation among old Labour stalwarts. By contrast, Gordon Brown has often presented his new Labour economic policies in old Labour terms. Mr Blair now has to spend more time building up a new Labour cadre, as well as consulting more with sympathetic ministers on the Centre-Right who have tended to be ignored. It will be interesting to see if the length of Cabinet meetings expands much beyond the 30-minute average recorded at one point last year.

Mr Blair will have to move more carefully now over the realignment of the Centre-Left which he has championed almost alone in the Cabinet, apart from Mr Mandelson. However, this was already in danger of stalling before the latter's resignation. Many ministers are hostile both to the Jenkins report on electoral reform and to closer collaboration with the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Blair kept co-operation alive yesterday by stressing his ideological closeness to Paddy Ashdown's Liberal Democrats, but don't expect any big leaps forward. Mr Blair and Mr Ashdown are both constrained by their parties. The most intriguing area for tuition, these were essentially campaigning devices which emerged from testing by focus groups of swing voters. However effective in electoral terms, the more specific ones, on NHS waiting lists and class sizes, were misguided. Almost no one except Frank Dobson and a couple of Blairite advisers believes the pledge on waiting lists is good health policy. It has distorted the allocation of resources, and along with serious weaknesses in nurse training and retention inherited from the Tories, has contributed to serious problems in hospitals. But the pledge has to be achieved, or modified.

The challenge for Mr Blair is whether, like Margaret Thatcher in 1981, he responds to adversity and setbacks by being more radical. He has no real choice. If Mr Blair is to meet the test he has set himself of being judged at the next general election on promises delivered on schools, hospitals, crime, the economy, welfare and Europe, he has to be bolder. Blairism is at a turning point.

peter.riddell@the-times.co.uk



Peter Riddell



MARGARET COOK: A SLIGHT & DELICATE CREATURE

Boys will always be boys

Yesterday morning I had planned to write about President Clinton and impeachment, then the Margaret Cook memoirs were published. After a brief discussion with the office, I switched to that. I had already read the story on the front pages of the Sunday papers, and had listened to the early comment on *Breakfast With Frost*. I turned to the pages of serialisation in *The Sunday Times News Review*. It was then that I realised the remarkable parallels between the Clinton and the Cook stories.

The most striking is the similarity of the psychological drama. Cast both stories as novels, and ask what is the core of the plot. A mature woman is married to a man who is a perpetual adolescent; he is clever, and good with words, but lacks a sense of self-worth, and relieves his depression with recurrent affairs of varying importance. He finds his wife's strength and maturity both reassuring and threatening. The affairs offer him an escape into guilt-free, because disposable, relationships.

The wife enjoys the success of the husband's career, and the vicarious prestige of his life. She knows he can never be "cured" of his immaturity or his depressive temperament. She sees that his cleverness, particularly with words, is only that, that he is a mouth not a brain, that he has difficulty in maintaining real relationships. She suspects it will all end in tears, perhaps in disgrace. Nevertheless, she is bound to her husband by the feeling that he needs mothering, and by compassion for his pain.

In Margaret Cook's case, the husband rejected her, and decided to marry one of his succession of lovers, partly as a political calculation. The key decision seems to have been made in a telephone conversation with the Prime Minister. If that had gone the other way, Margaret Cook would have stayed; she still feels love for her former husband, even if it only fuels her anger at his betrayal. In Hillary's case, the political decision went the other way: despite her equal sense of betrayal, she sticks with her husband and has become his final mistress. If she left, it would be all over for him.

By a coincidence, the two men have been left in the same political position, that of a lame duck, still in office, but for only a limited period of declining power. Robin Cook is safe because Peter Mandelson has gone. Tony Blair, a good-natured

Both Cook and Clinton show an innate childishness that could only end in tears

man but one who calculates the odds as carefully as Sky Masterson, cannot afford to lose two senior ministers in one month. This security is, however, temporary. Mr Cook is now an embarrassment not an asset to the Government; at the next reshuffle, or the one after, he will be dropped, and nobody imagines that he will ever hold office again.

It is the same with Bill Clinton. He may, or may not, survive the impeachment proceedings before the Senate. If he does, he will struggle through another couple of years as a discredited President, without reputation and with little political weight. Both men know that history will be unkind to them, though the scale is different. It is one thing to have been President of the United States, and another to have been the British Foreign Secretary for two or three years. Of course, failure is more bitter in the greater office.

On *Breakfast With Frost*, Tony Blair said something to the effect that Robin Cook was the most admired British Foreign Secretary in Europe "for many years". In my experience that is not true. The European view, so far as I have met it, is that Tony Blair himself, Peter Mandelson and Gordon Brown have been the three most influential ministers in terms of European affairs. Robin Cook is regarded as a competent Foreign Office spokesman, but with less political weight than most European Foreign Ministers enjoy. He is seen as sharing much the same standing as Malcolm Rifkind, another Scottish debater, though a better-balanced personality. The last British Foreign Secretary to be widely admired in Europe was Douglas Hurd. He was thought to have personal authority and seriousness: it is not "many years" since he retired.

Outside Europe, Robin Cook has made a number of minor blunders: when the Queen was touring India, over involvement in Sierra Leone,

until 1960. She and the family doctor, Eduard Bloch, who was Jewish, are the main authorities for Hitler's early childhood. After the war, Paula, who never exploited her position as sister of the Führer, spoke of her mother as "a very soft and tender person... it was especially my brother Adolf who challenged my father to extreme harshness and who got his sound thrashing every day". Hitler himself said that his beloved mother lived in constant concern about the beatings.

Hitler's father died when he was 13, his mother four years later. Both Paula and Dr Bloch testify to Hitler's "indefatigable" care for his mother when she was dying of breast cancer. After his father's death, Hitler dropped out of school and lived a hippy-like life of fantasy in Vienna. When one reads Ian Kershaw's account, one cannot avoid feeling compassion for the sufferings of this abnormal but gifted boy, as well as being aware of the terrible consequences of his fantasies.

Bill Clinton and Robin Cook are no Hitlers, but in each case something fundamental seems to have gone wrong. Bill Clinton had disastrous parenting; we do not know the psychological cause of Robin Cook's unhappiness, but he has plainly been very unhappy. Margaret Cook describes his reaction to his discovery that he had no support for the Labour leadership after John Smith's death. "He sank into the deepest despondency... he talked of the paradox that Labour could well win the next election and that he would then be in the Cabinet, but he felt anything other than elated." At the time this was apparent to the most casual observer. I remember passing Mr Cook in 1996 on the pavement outside St Stephen's Yard; he was alone in his thoughts, his expression was one of depression, of an inward-looking despair.

Indeed, Robin Cook is a tragic figure. One can feel sympathy for the anguished child that is somewhere inside him, and for his lost hopes. But he cannot last long as Foreign Secretary, and little good can come of his remaining months in office. He is not new Labour; he is not old Labour; he is not the future of Labour. Perhaps it is a pity that Peter Mandelson has gone; of the two men he was the one whose political future was worth saving.

comment@the-times.co.uk



William Rees-Mogg



That's Wendy

AFTER all the scurrilous innuendo inspired by the trade trip to Copacabana by my good friend Peter Mandelson, I am delighted to learn that Wendy is cruising towards an honour for his work with the boys from Brazil.

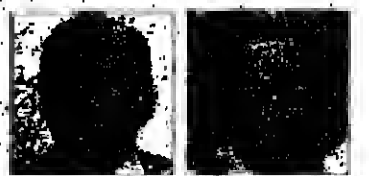
The Brit, who made an "outstanding contribution to strengthening economic ties" between Britain and Brazil, is to be recognised. Señor Rubens Antonio Barbosa, the Brazilian Ambassador, is to present the "personality of the year" award at a gala dinner at the Dorchester next month.

To assure Wendy of victory, the Diary has sent His Excellency its nomination, with notes detailing how energetically Wendy pursued export outlets for his country. Ah, Wendy is back. Quite wonderful.

I HAVE no faith in a "Downing Street inquiry" into the contract awarded to Sarah Macaulay, so-called girlfriend of Gordon Brown. Little has been done since I broke the news of the award a year ago.

Drama Queen

FATHER-IN-LAW to a prince he may about to be, but Christopher Rhys-Jones (below left) is treated with little regal respect. "He was appar-



ing in a play at the memorial hall," says a source in Brinsley, his Kent village. "One scene required him to eat a piece of Turkish delight lying on the floor — but a joker had sprayed it with WD40. Christopher was furious and stormed out, never to grace the stage again." Marjorie at the Brinsley Drama Group decline to comment, but one aggrieved member says: "It's a damn shame. The [Rhys-Jones] might have come to see our productions."

LESS gripped by wedding fever is Dame Barbara Cartland (above). "It does seem a rather dull business," opines the pink dame, tiring of the love game, being 97 and all. But surely Prince Edward is fairly exciting? "He is very young and I've never met him, at least I don't think so." But ma'am, you must approve of Sophie, striking for feminism by continuing to work? "Royals are expected to behave royally," she argues benevolently. "I don't want to go to a wedding like that." I urge royal sons to send Babs a stiffy.

Meal ticket

THAT late-night exercise enthusiast Ron Davis is not letting his little awkwardness on Clapham Common get between him and God. The edited King of Wales is to make his first speech since his career blip at a "lunchtime conversation" in the City at Wesley's Chapel. Should he feel moved by the confessional



atmosphere to revive his "meal" (sic), I trust the brokers in the congregation will show their customary sensitivity.

Bed panner

THE splendid Ann Widdecombe is resorting to guerrilla warfare to attack Government bed-snatchers. Ann Keen MP, a Labour toiler, was banging on about why we do not need more hospital beds (a change there, surely?) on a Sky phone-in and then the delicious Ann called. She unzipped her grenades and blew apart the bed-snatchers' cast. Afterwards, Mrs Keen was said to look quite pale and very cross.

OH, no. Wendy's comeback has gone belly up. I hear that his newest best friend, the Prince of Wales, has not given the resignation "more than a moment's notice".

JASPER GERARD

'In Russia the desires of the potential customer are irrelevant — you simply queue up and get what you are given'

I was driving through the grey slush on a bleak country road near the godforsaken town of Klin (birthplace of Tchaikovsky) last week when my passenger remarked upon the large concrete slabs that line almost every road in the former Soviet Union. "Those things are hideous," he said, not without reason. "Well, the Soviets probably thought they looked modern," somebody else piped up from the back seat. "And that's all they have in the way of fencing," she added.

Here, everyone agreed, she had hit upon the problem. Russia does not have a supply-and-demand economy, it has a supply economy. The potential consumer's desires are irrelevant — you get what you are given. Under Communism, and in

the early years of perestroika, if you saw a queue in the street you would join it without knowing what was on sale at the end of it. People stood freezing for hours in the hope that a street trader's box of bath-sponges would not run out before they reached the front.

Essentially, if someone was selling it, you needed to buy it — macaroni, soap, oranges, toothbrushes. "I want some cream cheese," you might think. "Sorry madam, we've only got lightbulbs," the sales assistant might say. So, the next time you went shopping, you would know to ask for lightbulbs. Such would be the roaring trade in lightbulbs that the supply would be endlessly maintained, while cream cheese remained an unattainable dream. A supply economy which creates for itself the illusion of

demand is established. (In fact, both lightbulbs and cream cheese were equally hard to come by in the early 1990s, along with everything else.)

Things perked up a bit under Boris Yeltsin's presidency, but, since the catastrophic economic crash in August, factories have closed, useless, grim and ludicrously expensive industrial towns in the far North have been evacuated in their entirety and the former Soviet workforce is at a loss as to what to do with itself.

The vast and long-since superfluous staff of factories making televisions to 1960s standards demand in vain that their back-

Anna Blundy



wages be paid and their jobs be returned to them. Although they, at least, have something with which to barter privately — old televisions. The scientists and technicians populating the hundreds of secret cities all over Russia are not so lucky, unless one counts the odd container of plutonium, known to be readily available to the determined.

Barter as payment now accounts for 80 per cent of the economy and it can be a dirty game. On January 4, Estonia announced a decision to grant the Russian town of Ivangorod, situated on its border, 721,000 krona of what it described as

"humanitarian aid" with which to pay off Ivangorod's debt to the Estonian town of Narva for water supply and sewage system services.

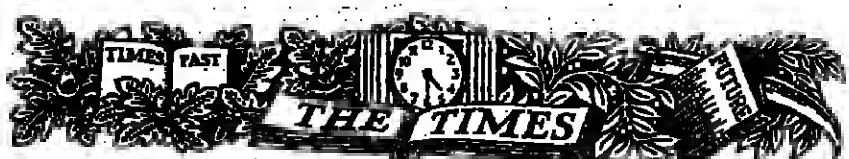
Having accrued a debt of \$1 million since Estonia's independence, the Russians, whose water and sewage disposal was finally cut off on January 2, threatened to dump their sewage into the Narova River to be carried to the Bay of Finland. The Estonians backed down and accepted their own money as payment for their own services.

In Chelyabinsk, a company that, among other things, constructs metro systems, was unable to pay its taxes, so the Chelyabinsk authorities ordered the company to construct them a

metro system. Whether or not Chelyabinsk needed a metro did not come into the equation. Lada factories continue to churn out 1950s Fiats with the same ancient equipment. Why? Because that is what they do.

Yevgeny Primakov, the Russian Prime Minister, is keen to stabilise the country's devastated economy and to stop the rouble plummeting much lower than its present rate of 22 to the dollar. But the day when old ladies in dusty uniforms stop watching metro escalators simply because they have always been escalator watchers, and when demand for cream cheese or lightbulbs results in an abundance of cream cheese and lightbulbs, still seems a long way off.

comment@the-times.co.uk



THE COOK BOOK

Public and private lessons for the Foreign Secretary

Robin Cook is a powerful analyst of personal forces. In the Labour Cabinet he is dominant in the realms of language and ideas. He is a man of both single and independent mind. His virtues certainly fit him to be Foreign Secretary and his vices, even those so viciously set out by his ex-wife yesterday, do not debar him.

Whether he can maintain his position in the fractious, febrile administration that is the new New Labour is still debatable. Even before yesterday's attacks, Mr Cook was famous for ending his marriage of 29 years in 1997 in a Heathrow VIP lounge, with a newspaper about to reveal his longstanding affair with his secretary, a wife with her holiday bags packed and a Downing Street press officer's pencil held to his head. When told to choose between wife and mistress, he brusquely discarded his wife, an action which, while easily explicable to a Pitt or Palmerston, carries a whiff of callous self-indulgence that has not often widely been admired.

Wide admiration is something which modern governments, most especially this modern government, actively seek. Mr Cook must have been nervous, therefore, about the publication of his wife's autobiography even though she could arguably do him no damage that he had not already inflicted on himself. Margaret Cook has not landed her punches as lightly as she disingenuously claims; what partner to a bitter divorce ever does? Yesterday's newspaper extract was an unimpressive catalogue not just of allegedly serial infidelity but of political jealousies, overweening vanity and episodes of lost self-control. But aside from her allegations of past drinking and pill-popping, there is little, including his reciprocated antipathy to Gordon Brown, that was not already public knowledge.

Diplomacy is Mr Cook's job; and it is as a diplomat, in the broadest sense of that term, that he must in future be carefully judged. He needs to be able to bring people behind him for the British interest, not just his own people but other politicians and diplomats. In this sphere of human relations, where his former wife dismisses him as a man of "no natural courtesy and sympathy", she is not the only observer to find the Foreign Secretary wanting.

Mr Cook, so brilliant an exploiter of weakness in opposition, has been un-

steady himself at the Foreign Office, a portfolio that he at first seemed almost to hold in contempt. His clumsy attempt to appoint Gaynor Regan, now the second Mrs Cook, as his diary secretary was a crass, if minor, misjudgment that symbolised a disdain for the institutional environment. The damage he has inflicted on the internal morale and international standing of the FO is likely to be the main thrust of the criticisms directed against him tomorrow, when the Foreign Affairs Select Committee takes testimony from the prematurely retiring Sir David Gore-Booth — the diplomat whose sad fate it was to be High Commissioner to India when Mr Cook's indecate handling of Kashmir mirrored the Queen's visit in controversy.

Sir David is himself hardly the most sensitive soul in the service — he is before the committee to rebut the Ombudsman's verdict on his handling of an incident when he was Ambassador to Saudi Arabia — but he speaks for a wide constituency of officials unhappy with Mr Cook's cavalier attitude to briefings, with his tendency to blame subordinates for his not infrequent blunders, and with what is seen as a counterproductive obsession with "re-branding" the Foreign Office. The cooler Mr Cook sets out to make Britannia's outposts, it is argued, the more he perpetuates tired clichés of British diplomacy as a bastion of chinless privilege.

There is substance to these charges, as there is to the view that Mr Cook's video-launched ethical foreign policy gratuitously distorted the pursuit of British interests. If he is to stay at the Foreign Office, he needs to mend relations with his staff quite as much as he needs to rebuild bridges in Cabinet. There is some evidence that he has recently tried harder than before to put his back into his job, and may even be starting to enjoy it. That is in his own interest as well as Labour's; it is hard now to see him rising beyond that role.

The Cabinet would not be the stronger for his departure. There is need for a heavyweight counter to the Chancellor, particularly on EMU where Mr Cook's sceptical eye is a valuable presence. One hope around which the Labour leadership should rally is that this thorny but talented minister can bring an end to this time when he has been an understandably distracted man.

NURSING FOR NURSES

A proper career structure is as important as pay

Lack of recruits to any profession is usually blamed on one factor: pay. That is assumed to be the case with the current shortage of nurses. Eight thousand are needed to fill hospital vacancies. Yet a sudden increase in nurses' pay is unlikely to result in a sudden rise in numbers of recruits or to ease the hospitals' immediate predicament. The Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, must tackle all aspects of the profession with the same radicalism that David Blunkett, the Education Secretary, has shown towards teaching. Failure to do so will threaten reforms whose implementation depends on there being enough nurses.

Nurses' pay lags behind that of other public services: a junior nurse is paid 17 per cent less than a new teacher. Yet simply promising an inflation-busting wage increase would be a short-sighted response — and one that Gordon Brown is likely to resist. Any pay rise should be conditional on reform of the existing straitjacket of grades and pay scales. Nurses' salaries take too little account of any added responsibilities, and the system prevents them from earning more than £25,000 unless they move into management.

The best recruits will enter nursing only if it offers a secure career progression, rewarding skills and expertise. At present there is no formal fast track promotion scheme. Such ideas were sketched out by the former Health Minister, Alan Milburn,

before his promotion to Chief Secretary. The complaints they provoked from nursing unions should not deter Mr Dobson from giving them further thought. Flexibility in pay should be accompanied by more adaptable working practices — the providing of crèches, for instance, or the matching of shifts with the school day.

Ministers should also take a fresh look at nurses' training. Fourteen per cent dropped out last year. Could this rate be lowered by tailoring training more closely to the level of skills required, allowing some nurses to become experts in certain fields, and others to learn as apprentices on wards? Yet Mr Dobson cannot wait the three years it takes for a nurse to be trained. Quite apart from the existing 8,000 vacancies, a quarter of all nurses will reach retirement age next year.

Although he considers the practice an "international disgrace", Mr Dobson should be thankful that people are willing to come to Britain and work in a hospital at the current level of pay. He should welcome them — and offer to train them, too. He must do more, too, to lure the 77,000 nurses who have left back into the profession. Schemes to retrain them already exist; but financial incentives are needed. Nursing reform is not only a necessary part of the Government's modernisation project, but also a pressing political need if cries of "crisis" are not to continue to emanate from hospital wards.

EVER YOUNG

Fiction handles ageing better than modern societies do

Europe's most famous reporter turned 70 yesterday, but still retains the childish looks, boyish enthusiasm and sexless energy that have won him admiring fans around the world and have sold 170 million copies of 22 books in 51 languages. Tintin is not only that rare example of a famous Belgian: he has become a figure so benignly real to all those who have followed him across remote deserts, down darkened corridors and to the outer reaches of the seas and the heavens that scientists and legislators are loath to admit that he is a mere figment of an illustrator's imagination. The French parliament has staged a debate in which each faction will claim him for their own. Psychoanalysts delve into Tintin's ambiguous sexuality. And scholars compile exegeses of the philosophy, social significance and *Weltanschauung* of the hack, his quiff and his dog.

A ruder and less complex navigator through this troubled world also turns 70 this year with the promise of long-delayed matrimony. Popeye is finally to marry Olive Oyl after a courtship that must rank as the longest and most rancorous in all seafaring history. The ceremony will take place on the isle of Spinachvania, and all place on the isle of Spinachvania, and all Hollywood's gossip columnists are waiting

to see whether the pipe-smoking old seadog will settle down with his new family, including the already adopted youngest member, Sweet Pea.

The two explorers — the childhood equivalents of *The Archers*, reappearing with timeless regularity — have now passed pensionable age, but are as actively engaged in life as they were when comic strips were young and celluloid a novelty. Those of more solid flesh and blood, however, find that age presents more formidable barriers. However well they preserve their bodies, their energies and talents are all too often ignored or disparaged by today's youth-obsessed society. Ageism is an ugly word, but it denotes an uglier phenomenon. It is the opposite of what most cultures in all places and all ages have inculcated: respect for the old, honour for the wise and roles for all.

Luckily, a growing movement recognises the foolishness of this shallow worship of youth. Older people are increasingly being brought back to the workplace, the television screen and the voluntary organisation. Their experience enriches us, just as those whose fictional lives have reached 70 entertain us. Isn't it time, however, that just a few wrinkles appeared on Tintin's brow?

Call for 'honesty' over euro policy

From Mr George Thomas

Sir, Now that the euro has been launched, this country should decide once and for all, and without delay, whether it wants to be in or out of the European Union.

There can seldom have been an issue over which we have so needed, but have never had or been less likely to get, honest government: honest government being government that is quite truthful about the anticipated outcome of its policies.

One thing that is now clear, after years of obfuscation, is that the EU intends to become a federal state. In some ways it already has more federal powers than the federal Government of the US and we already know that these will increase.

Countries that are neither in nor out — those not converting to the euro — will suffer the worst of both worlds. If they prosper they will be accused of unfair practices and will be "punished" and the cause of their success negated. Not being independent, they will be unable to defend themselves and their success will turn to failure. Failure from the outset is more likely, however, because Euro-bureaucracy and rules make successful trading outside euroland, for all but a few very large or very specialised businesses, almost impossible. For the UK this will be particularly damaging.

There are arguments for being in and for being out of the euro/EU, but the argument advanced in both Government and Opposition that we should "wait and see" will be so harmful that you have to wonder at their motives.

Yours faithfully,
GEORGE THOMAS,
17 Campden Hill Square, W8 7JY,
January 6.

From Mr Lance Anisfeld

Sir, The two most commonly heard economic arguments in favour of the single currency are the reduction of foreign exchange costs for industry and the deflationary price differences across Europe which it will reveal. Both these arguments are bogus. Costs for one business are revenues for another. With fewer foreign exchange transactions, banks and foreign exchange dealers must surely lose out by an equal amount to the gains for industry. The net effect on business will be completely neutral.

Price differences have always existed and always will. However, sophisticated consumers know how to take advantage of them, and it is much more likely that the development of Internet technology will increase real global competition than — as is sometimes patronisingly argued — that the redenomination of prices will spare consumers the need to get out their calculators. The beer trips across the Channel prove that they are not that ignorant where gains are to be had.

It is now very clear that political integration is what most pro-Europeans clamour for. I too am a pro-European, one who wants Europe to grow peacefully and democratically — which is why I completely oppose what is now happening in continental Europe. Forget the mild disaster of the ERM. Look what has happened to other European federations in the last ten years — namely the USSR and Yugoslavia. A federal superstate is doomed to collapse and possibly civil war.

I pray for my children's sake that we remain independent and stay out. Sincerely,
LANCE ANISFELD
(Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, 1991-92),
33 Linden Lea, NZ ORF,
January 5.

From Mr Robert Woollard

Sir, I disagree with Mr Stan Snowdon (letter, January 5) that the small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) would benefit by being inside euro-

land. Oskar Lafontaine let the cat out of the bag when he put tax harmonisation firmly on the agenda (leading article, November 28). This doesn't suit the British electorate, let alone Britain's SMEs. I suspect that the executive director of the Federation of Small Businesses (letter, January 1) understands this.

I formed my own SME almost 30 years ago. Our overseas business is nearly always transacted in US dollars. If anyone wishes to deal in euros I have no problem. However, for this country to give up 1,000 years of economic and political independence in order to prove that we are good Europeans is daft.

The euro is but a few days old. Europe as it stands is largely socialist and needs to change dramatically. If you asked me to choose today between euroland and the US dollar region, there is only one choice: to apply for membership of the North American Free Trade Agreement immediately.

In a few years' time the story may be different. Let's wait and see how this experiment pans out — we have little to lose and much to gain.

Yours sincerely,
ROBERT WOOLLARD
(Chairman/Managing Director),
Cascom Limited,
Cascom House, Reform Road,
Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 8BV,
January 5.

Letters may be faxed to 0171-782 5046.
e-mail to: letters@the-times.co.uk

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN Telephone 0171-782 5000

Christ 'made-over' as Che Guevara

From the Reverend
Richard Thomas, MIPR

Sir, Once again a chorus of tight-lipped disapproval rises from the Churches over next Easter's advertising campaign ("Jesus is given new revolutionary image", report, January 6). Like Christ's children sitting in the marketplace, the critics are calling out to each other "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry" (Luke vii, 32).

I shall certainly be supporting the campaign in the Oxford diocese. The image of a revolutionary, killed for wanting to change the world, is not inappropriate for celebrating the death and resurrection of Jesus, who was himself mistaken for a revolutionary and tried for blasphemy.

It is a striking and bold campaign which uses the language of parable, taking images that contrast with an accepted understanding of God, so that new avenues to explore faith are opened. Advertising cannot do the job of a good sermon, but it is a medium excellently suited to public parable, and the first task of the Christian communicator is to make these connections.

The Churches Advertising Network has created many stimulating campaigns, without much thanks or any financial support from church leaders. Every penny for the campaigns has had to be raised by network members. A poll conducted after an Easter campaign in 1995 showed that over 70 per cent of the population thought the Church should be advertising, and more than 35 per cent said it made them think about their own faith.

It really doesn't matter if church leaders don't relate to this campaign — it's not designed for them. What matters is that an opportunity created for a public discussion of the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus should not be sacrificed on the altar of ecclesiastical correctness.

Yours sincerely,
RICHARD THOMAS
(Communications Director,
Diocese of Oxford),
Diocesan Church House,
North Hinksey, Oxford OX2 0NB,
January 6.

Cromwell escutcheon

From Mr T. P. J. Edlin

Sir, The taffy escutcheon taken from Oliver Cromwell's hearse by Robert Uvedale in 1658 (report, January 5) is currently in the possession of Westminster School, Uvedale's *alma mater*.

As you report, Uvedale, then a 16-year-old scholar at the school, darted between the soldiery guarding the bier and snatched from it the little silk banner — known at the school as the Majesty Scutcheon — disappearing with it into the crowd of his school-fellows before anyone could recover from the shock of surprise and catch him.

Having been preserved by the Uvedale family for over 300 years, the boy's souvenir passed into the hands

of a descendant, Miss Mary West, by whom it was given to the school in 1964, since when it has hung outside the Head Master's study.

John Carleton, Head Master at the time of the gift, has described the theft as not merely an act of bravado by Uvedale but an expression of the school's indignant feelings at the lavish honour being paid to one he had been taught to regard as a usurper.

Uvedale himself (1642-1722) went on to become a skilled cultivator of exotic plants, owner of one of the first greenhouses in England, and author of a 14-volume herbarium.

Yours faithfully,
T. P. J. EDLIN,
Merton College,
Oxford OX1 4JD,
January 6.

Pig farmers' plight

From Mr Robin Bear

Sir, The sad plight of British pig farmers is well expressed in the letter from Paul Cross (January 4), highlighting the excessive profits made by the supermarkets at the expense of the producer and of the retail customer.

Nevertheless our supermarkets display a multitude of imported pig products in the form of a chopped, cured sausage commonly known as "salami": *Milano* and *Felino* from Italy, *chorizo* from Spain, *sauccisson* sec from France, *biernurst* from Germany are only a few examples of an inviting product produced by every European country other than Britain.

Our pig farmers should broaden their horizons and think beyond bacon, ham and pork. Why do we not have an English rival to Parma ham?

Yours faithfully,
ROBIN BEAR,
Scraggs Farm,
Cowden, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7EB.

Animal drug tests

From Professor A. W. Cuthbert, FRs

Sir, Dr Vernon Coleman's claim (letter, December 31) that animals and humans are so different that experiments performed on animals are "worthless and misleading" is patently untrue.

A cursory examination of modern prescribing practices shows that for many conditions, for example affecting the heart, circulation, respiratory system and kidneys, for inflammatory states, for pain relief, for bacterial infections etc, the same drugs are used in veterinary practice as for human medicine. It is true that there are instances in which the response to a particular drug differs in humans from that in some animal species, similar to the incidence of different responses to a given drug in humans of different ethnic origin; but such instances are exceptional.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN CUTHBERT,
University of Cambridge,
Department of Pharmacology,
Tennis Court Road,
Cambridge CB2 1QJ,
January 1.

Some talk of . . .

From Major David Scowcroft

Sir, Each morning I walk past the impressive array of military hero statues in Whitehall on my way to paperwork in the Stainesque MoD main building. The statue of Raleigh outside it is not overwhelmed by its neighbours but stands in modest distinction.

The requirement is not its removal, as is suggested from time to time (letters, August 12, 19 and 22, 1996), but the positioning of a similar-size statue to achieve symmetry. The monument should be to one not as august as Montgomery but of a modest military background. (My own military career, for instance, is exceedingly modest.)

Yours sincerely,
DAVID SCOWCROFT,
Ministry of Defence,
Room 4158, Main Building,
Whitehall, SW1A 2HB,
January 4.

From Mr R. T. Oerton

Sir, Dr Peter Rossdale (letter, December 31) points out that a number of animals are bred for laboratory use, and that if the laboratory use of animals were to cease that number would diminish. He then adds: "Should we deny these the gift of life . . . Is it better to have lived and suffered than never to have lived at all?"

This surely is an example of the confusion of thinking which bedevils so much discussion on this and other subjects. As to Dr Rossdale's first question, an animal not yet conceived is not an entity to which anything can be denied or given. His second question makes sense only if posed in relation to an entity which exists or has existed: it cannot be asked about an animal which never comes into existence.

Yours faithfully,
R. T. OERTON,
The Granary, Park Lane,
Cannington, Bridgwater,
Somerset TA5 2LU,
January 1.

Thank goodness for plain old 1999

From Professor G. J. P. O'Daly

Sir, Although he correctly gives *nonaginta novem* as the Latin for 99, Sir George Engle (letter, January 6) cannot be right to attribute elaborate French *quatre-vingt dix-neuf* to laconic Caesar's Gallic conquest. The true francophone descendant of Latin usage is the compact French-Swiss *nonante neuf*.

As for the date of the current year, every schoolboy would once have known that we are now in *2752 a.u.c.* (*ab urbe condita*: from the foundation of the city of Rome). Postpone the millennium at once!

Yours faithfully,
GERARD O'DALY,
Department of Greek and Latin,
University College London,
Gower Street, WC1E 6BT.
g.o'daly@ucl.ac.uk
January 6.

From Mr Malcolm Oliver

Sir, Surely the reason that the French eschew the already-available *nonante neuf* in favour of the Académie-endorsed *quatre-vingt dix-neuf* owes less to the Roman conquest than to a desire to avoid being mistaken for Belgians.

Yours sincerely,
MALCOLM OLIVER,
26 Green Lane,
Purley, Surrey CR8 3PG,
January 6.

From Mrs Fenella Ignatiev

Sir, It may be no coincidence that the Russian word for syllable is *slog*. To write 1999 in Russian requires 14 of them: *тысяча девятсот девятая год*.

No wonder they love their acronyms so much — USSR, KGB, NKVD . . .

Yours faithfully,
FENELLA IGNATIEV,
21a Gunterstone Road, W14 9BP,
January 6.

From Mr Richard C. Dixon

Sir, I have always subscribed to the subtraction method of Roman numerology as being easier and neater than those based on addition or abbreviation. MCMCLXXXVIII would have been abhorred by Horace, Pliny and Cicero. MIM is too ugly for the likes of Ovid, but MCMXCIX would appeal to the military mind of Tacitus and the great Caesar; as it does to me.

Yours sincerely,
RICHARD DIXON,
210 Dover Road,
Walmer, Deal, Kent CT14 7NB,
January 6.

From Mr Philip Le Brocq

Sir, That old stickler A. E. Housman might have taken this matter more gravely. On November 26, 1930, he ended a letter to Monica Bridges: "I hope that you and yours are well, but your son must not hope for heaven if he writes MCMXXX for MDCCCXXX."

Yours faithfully,
PHILIP LE BROCCQ,
The Cottage, le Bourg,
St Clement, Jersey JE2 6FY.
plebrocq@super.net.uk
January 7.

From Mr P. W. Esling

Sir, MDCCCCLXXXVIII or MIM? The problem for the Roman stone-mason was a very simple one: Am I being paid *per horam* or *per opus*?

Yours,
PETER W. ESLING,
3 Llysnewydd Cottages,
Drefach Felindre,
Llandysul, Dyfed SA44 5UT,
January 6.

Puzzles galore

From Mr G. D. Clarke

Sir, Jumbo crosswords for Christmas Eve, Boxing Day, Bank Holiday, New Year's Day, new year weekend — this is sheer sadism. My social life is in ruins and I haven't finished one yet. Can we not come to some agreement whereby you publish, say, one a week and I stop writing you letters?

Yours faithfully,
G. D. CLARKE,
31 Crutchfield Lane,
Walton-on-Thames,
Surrey KT12 2QY,
January 2.

Sound and fury

From Mr Robin Stephenson

Sir, Environmental health inspectors in Warrington, Cheshire, are investigating an intermittent whining "that can be heard only by women" (News in brief, December 31).

This phenomenon would be no mystery to women in the South of England, where the period between Christmas and new year is filled with the whining of their menfolk bewailing a Christmas spent with relatives they detest and anticipating the demands of the new year sales.

At least in Warrington the whining is only intermittent.

Yours,
ROBIN STEPHENSON,
The Chestnuts,
22 Greenacres Drive, Ringmer,
Lewes, East Sussex BN8 5LZ,
January 3.

OBITUARIES

THE MARQUESS OF BRISTOL

Frederick William John Augustus Hervey, 7th Marquess of Bristol was found dead yesterday aged 44. He was born on September 15, 1954.

The Hervey family has produced several notable rogues over the centuries, from the 18th-century Earl-Bishop of Derry, who amused himself by having the plumpiest parsons in his diocese race through a bog for a particularly rich and vacant living (only to give it to someone else), to the 6th Marquess, who was jailed for three years for jewellery theft in the 1930s and who decided to sell guns to the Republicans during the Spanish Civil War and then betrayed them to the Francoists.

But John, son of the latter and the 7th Marquess of Bristol, could compete with any of them. Historians and geneticists could make much of the fact that almost every aspect of John Bristol's personality and behaviour had extensive precedents in his well-documented family history, although it should be noted that the Herveys of the 19th century were models of propriety. But, whether or not he was ultimately a victim of heredity, Bristol's life remains a tragic tale of an intelligent man who destroyed himself through excess. His addictions to cocaine and heroin left him a very sick man while still in his thirties, got him sent to prison twice and played a major role in the squandering of an immense fortune.

Frederick William John Augustus Hervey was born heir to the

splendours of Ickworth House in Suffolk in 1954, to Victor, 6th Marquess of Bristol and his first wife Pauline (née Bolton). The collapse of his parents' marriage when Johnny, as he was known to friends and family, was five, provided him with the classic background for later waywardness, but he was the first to point out that much of his childhood was remarkably happy. His father's second wife, Juliet Fitzwilliam, and Teddy Lambton, the race horse trainer whom his mother married after her divorce, were warm and generous step-parents.

Johnny's relationship with his father was always difficult, even if the allegation that the 6th Marquess had compelled his son to wear long white gloves on a daily basis, made by his defence QC in his trial for possession of heroin and cocaine in 1993, was, as Bristol himself claimed, the first that he had ever heard of it. His father was a cold man who considered himself above the rules governing the rest of society, and he passed these characteristics on to his son.

Johnny Hervey was educated at Harrow, where he was a contemporary of the Marquess of Blandford, who was to become his main rival as Britain's most notorious peer. He completed his education at Neuchâtel University in France, the boys' equivalent of a finishing school. At the age of 18 he inherited more than a million pounds from a trust fund. The freedom this afforded him did not combine well with the appetite for excess and the self-destructive streak he had inherited, and he quickly became in-

involved with drugs, at first cocaine and later heroin, through a "fast" set of wealthy friends at Oxford University.

Until he was 24 Hervey managed to combine an escalating drug habit with full-time employment, at first at Donaldson's estate agents and later running a Rolls-Royce dealership and working at a small bank. But in 1978 he moved to Paris, and from that point on was essentially a man of leisure, although he liked to present himself as a successful entrepreneur. He spent prodigiously, on drugs, lavish parties, cars, helicopters and yachts, and on a succession of homes, in London, Monaco, Paris and New York.

As Hervey reached adulthood, relations with his father, always distant and stiflingly formal during his childhood, began to deteriorate badly. In 1974 his father married Yvonne Sutton, Johnny's second step-mother as "some kind of under-secretary". Soon afterwards, his father stripped the family wing of Ickworth bare without informing his son, who was living there.

But perhaps the lowest point in the relationship came a few days before the young Johnny's marriage to Francesca Fisher, a 20-year-old teetotal vegetarian, in 1984. His father, then living in Monaco, took out an advertisement in *The Times* personal column to deliver an astonishing snub, announcing that he and his wife would not be attending the wedding "due to a prior engagement in London".

The following year the 6th Marquess died, and Johnny Bristol and his new wife moved into Ickworth. For a time things looked promising. He appeared to have conquered his addiction to drugs, which had led to his narrowly escaping a 15-year sentence after his arrest in New York in 1983 on charges of drug trafficking, and to have abandoned a promiscuous homosexuality which had been out in the open since around 1978. His desire to produce an heir and to settle down were clearly genuine, but it was not to be. Francesca left him for another man shortly after the move to Ickworth, and from then onwards his life spiralled downwards to disaster more or less unchecked.

In 1988 Bristol received a one-year prison sentence for attempting to smuggle cocaine into Jersey in his helicopter. The following year he was fined £3,000 for the possession of drugs. In 1990 he was deported from Australia for failing to declare his previous convictions, and in 1993 he was jailed for ten months for further drug offences. Only two days after his release he was arrested for possession of heroin. This time the court recognised that his addiction was an illness, and he was given two years' probation on condition that he received treatment for his addiction.

Meanwhile, Bristol had come into increasing conflict with the National Trust, which had taken control of Ickworth in 1986, in lieu of death duties owing on his grandfather's estate. The family had been granted free tenancy of a

wing of Ickworth in perpetuity as part of the deal, but a series of disputes with their tenant culminated in 1994 when the Trust began moves to have Bristol evicted, on the grounds that he had broken the conditions of the lease. The incidents cited included attacks on visitors to Ickworth by the Marquess's dogs and his habit of racing his beloved collection of classic cars around the estate. The Trust only relented when it became apparent that Bristol was in desperately poor health.

In February 1995 Bristol was admitted to St Mary's Hospital, Paddington. The formerly corpulent Marquess was now reported to weigh less than seven stone and to be unable to walk without the aid of sticks. By this stage he was a pathetic figure, who had been reduced to selling the last of his land at Ickworth to cover his debts.

Bristol was a more complex figure than the popular perception of him allowed. He was sometimes described as "charismatic" and many of his friends were in awe of him. He could be highly generous and possessed a certain arrogant and dashing charm. He was also something of a practical joker, albeit a rather sinister one. In one incident, which echoed the Earl-Bishop's celebrated race in its use of others for the Hervey amusement, he had a female American guest sail out into the lake at Ickworth in a rubber dinghy, and then sank it with his air rifle.

John Bristol had no children. His half-brother by his father's second marriage, Lord Frederick Hervey, succeeds him in the title.



The Marquess of Bristol: tragic tale of an intelligent man

SIR WILLIAM MARS-JONES

Sir William Mars-Jones, MBE, a Judge of the High Court, 1969-90, died yesterday aged 83. He was born on September 4, 1915.

Probably the stock picture that most people carried in their minds of William Mars-Jones was of a rather old-fashioned, strict and severe High Court Judge, very conscious of the dignity and importance of his office. He had tended to model himself on judges of an earlier generation—in particular on Sir Rowland Oliver who had created a great impression on him when he appeared before him as a young barrister. However, behind this facade lay a many-sided and intriguing personality, of which the stern exterior was but a part.

No stranger observing him sitting on the Bench in his court could possibly have guessed that he was gazing at a superb mimic and story-teller who could "take off" all his judicial colleagues. Nor would anyone have surmised that this stern judge was a consummate guitarist who could entertain his friends with songs to his own accompaniment on either the ukulele, the guitar or the piano.

In his boyhood days at Denbigh County School he was known as Bill the Post—this name derived from the fact that his father, the later Alderman Henry Mars Jones, sometime chairman of the Denbighshire County Council and considerable local potentate, ran the post office in the little village of Llansamman in the Hiraethog hills, as well as numerous other enterprises all based on that centre.

At school, William Lloyd Mars-Jones was greatly influenced by two of his teachers at Denbigh School. The first was the headmaster, W. A. Evans, a strict disciplinarian and believer in the work ethic. The other, who had an even greater influence upon him, was Stan Rees, who was subsequently to become a famous headmaster himself at Llanelwyr Grammar School. At Denbigh, Rees was the English master and he repaid a great love of English literature to his pupils with his own command of the Welsh art of the raconteur (of which he was an even greater exponent than Mars-Jones himself), to say

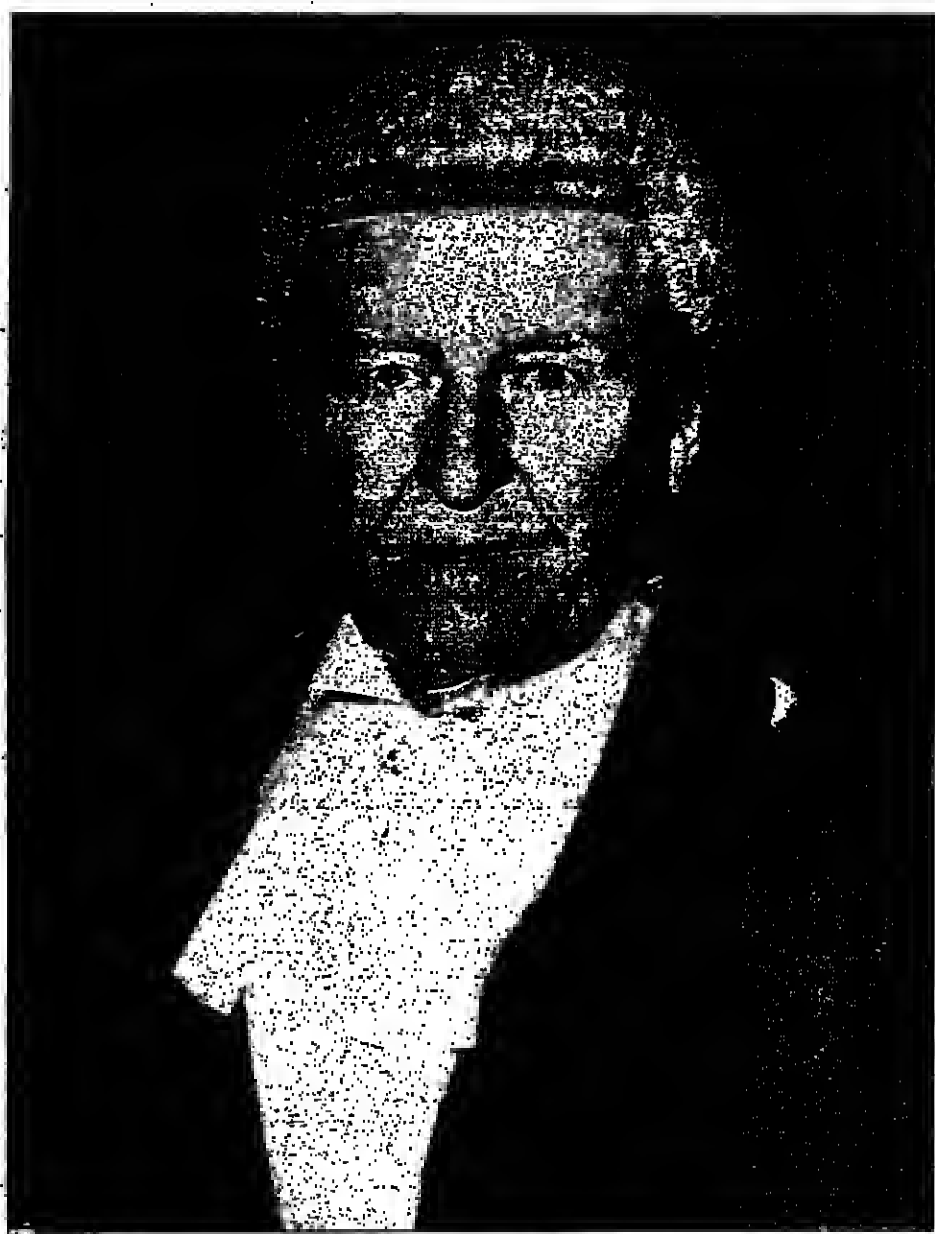
nothing of his feelings of loyalty to University College, Aberystwyth.

It was to that college's law faculty, then under the guidance of its inspirational head, Professor Thomas Levi, that Mars-Jones went from Denbigh School. At Aberystwyth he distinguished himself academically (taking a first in Law), politically (becoming president of the Union) and in the entertainment world—forming a famous double-act with Dr Reginald Thomas, sometime thereafter the Minister of the Brick Church on Fifth Avenue in New York.

From Aberystwyth Mars-Jones moved on to St John's College, Cambridge. There, pursuing his theatrical interests, he soon became a prominent member of the famous Cambridge Footlights. In the meantime he had joined Gray's Inn but, before he could be called to the Bar, the Second World War intervened. Mars-Jones joined the Navy and was called to the Bar at Gray's Inn in bell-bottom trousers in 1939. He eventually became a Lieutenant-commander and was appointed MBE (military) in 1945.

On his return from the war Mars-Jones stood as a Labour candidate in the 1945 election for his native constituency of West Denbigh. He ran a most amusing and vigorous campaign rather in tandem with his Liberal opponent and opposed to the sitting Conservative member, Sir Henry Morris-Jones. The latter won with a relatively small majority with Mars-Jones and Garner Evans, the Liberal, splitting the Opposition vote fairly evenly. There is little doubt that, had Mars-Jones succeeded in winning the seat, he would have had a distinguished parliamentary career. Yet his failure to pursue the life of politics was not really surprising: the impression he gave was of having few political ideas of his own. He came from a traditionally Liberal background and his adherence to the Labour Party depended very much on liberal interpretation of socialist doctrine.

After the general election he joined the Wales and Chester circuit and established a large practice from the chambers of the late Lord Justice Arthurs Davies at 1 Farrar's Building in the Temple. One of Mars-



Mars-Jones: a judge of the old school, conscious of the dignity of his office

Jones's greatest qualities was his loyalty to friends and institutions, and there was no doubting his unswerving loyalty to his old circuit. He joined it at a time when it was the custom to "follow the circuit" from Assize town to Assize town through each of the counties of Wales and Cheshire.

There was a close camaraderie between the members and the vintage of the two decades following the war was very good. Many of the members distinguished themselves as advocates, judges or as politicians—and circuit life was happy, if tumultuous. Mars-Jones served his circuit in

many ways: he was its junior in his early days, subsequently he became its leader and eventually its presiding judge. Shortly before his retirement he was unanimously elected an honorary life member.

He was a formidable and tenacious advocate and a sound lawyer. He had a tremendous capacity for work and mastered every case in which he was involved thoroughly. Extremely methodical in his approach, he tended to probe every point in a case rather than go for the jugular. His opponents learnt to respect his application and courage and his determination in the interests of his client. His

reputation among solicitors was that he was a great fighter for his side. What he lacked in discrimination he made up for in sheer tenacity. His weapon was the broadsword rather than the rapier. His opponents learnt that they could never take anything for granted if they had Bill Mars-Jones against them. He was a successful and admired advocate taking silk in 1957 and leading for the prosecution or the defence in a number of well-known criminal trials—he prosecuted in the notorious Moors Murder trial of 1965—as well as in a variety of civil cases.

It came as no surprise when

he was appointed to the High Court Bench in 1962. There he served in the Queen's Bench Division for the next 21 years (there never seems to have been much question of promotion). But his methods as an advocate did not desert him when he moved to the judicial sphere. He applied himself with equal vigour and care to mastering the detail of a case from the judicial chair. He was extremely methodical in his approach, very even-handed and with an ability to create an imposing "atmosphere" in his court.

He was not a great and creative lawyer but no one could better him at following the detail of evidence in a complicated case and presenting it in a direct and concise form to a jury. His sympathetic summing-up was thought to have had a good deal to do with the acquittal at the Old Bailey of the actor John Bindon on a murder charge in 1979; but there was never any doubt that he could be stern and forbidding—as he certainly was when he sentenced the Arab terrorist, Nizar Hirasawi, to 45 years' imprisonment (said to be the longest sentence ever imposed by a British court) for trying to blow up an El Al jumbo jet in 1986. He retired from the Bench at the age of 75 in 1990, but was still to be seen in the Garrick Club. From his earliest days at the Bar he lived in Gray's Inn with his devoted wife Sheila. He was very proud to have been Treasurer of the Inn in 1982, but took almost equal pride in his presidency, starting in 1995, of the University College of North Wales, Bangor.

He threw himself with his customary enthusiasm and vigour into a very successful campaign to raise private money for that distinguished Welsh academic institution. Naturally Welsh-speaking, he was elected an honorary White Bard of the Gorsedd of Bards of the Welsh National Eisteddfod in 1971 and was made an honorary LLD of the University of Wales in 1973.

His wife's death nearly a year ago came as a great blow to him, particularly as, with growing physical disabilities, he had become ever more dependent upon her. He leaves three sons, the middle one of whom, Adam Mars-Jones, is the novelist and short-story writer.

THE RIGHT REV FRANK WEST

The Right Rev Francis (Frank) West, Suffragan Bishop of Taunton, 1962-77, died on January 2 aged 89. He was born on January 9, 1909.

TALL, handsome and gifted with extraordinary charm, Frank West exercised an effective ministry in Anglican Orders at various levels. Early in life he found a call to ordination, partly through discovering, while taking part in a university mission, his gift for friendship among the workers in an industrial area of Halifax; and, although his work eventually took him to rather more rural spheres, he never lost his ability to get close to "ordinary" people.

A central churchman with a feel for history and a well-furnished mind, he knew better than most what was meant by a Church that was both Catholic and Reformed, while understanding equally the value of continuity and the necessity for innovation. He could lead worship and preach incisive sermons in such a way as to address the modern world with the wisdom and dignity of tradition.

It was the same with his writing. He produced six or seven books, small but distinguished, on aspects of the Church's history, some involving original research in archives. He also published an able portrait of the famous F. R. Barry, the Bishop of Southwell who made West an archdeacon in his diocese. When he retired to Aldbourne near Marlborough, he added a privately printed history of its lovely church to his published works.

Francis Horner West went to Berkhamsted School, read history and theology at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and trained for the ministry at Ridley Hall, returning there as Chaplain and Tutor after a happy curacy in the industrial parish of Burnmantoft, Leeds, in the Ripon diocese. There followed a move to the York diocese with the incumbency of Starbeck, and, while he was there, the beginning of his service as a Chaplain to the Forces.

Early in the war he was wounded in France when his batman was killed; but he returned to further active service, in North Africa, Italy, and

South East Asia (where he was mentioned in dispatches). He was then heavily involved in arranging, and lecturing in, postwar courses—held abroad and in England—for prospective ordinands from the Forces.

In 1946 he returned to civilian clerical life and went to the Southwell diocese to become vicar of Upton. While still at Upton, West was made Archdeacon of Newark, and from 1947 exercised this strenuous ministry for 15 years, combining it with responsibility first for Upton and then, from 1951, for East Retford, where he also served as rural dean. In 1962, at the invitation of the Bishop of Bath and Wells, he changed dioceses again to become Suffragan Bishop of Taunton, combining his episcopal duties there for the first nine years with ministering to Dinder, a tiny country parish south-east of Wells, and throughout the whole 15-year period occupying a prebendal stall in the cathedral.

He retired in 1977 to Aldbourne, after 15 years as a bishop, a period during which he established an especially effective ministry in schools, where he showed a real talent for engaging the young in constructive dialogue. There had been times, both as an archdeacon and as a bishop, when the load of work or the rivalry of the ambitious nearly broke him; but Beryl, his able and devoted wife, whom he had married in 1947 while still at Upton, was a constant source of support—becoming his life-line when age and infirmity overtook him. She survives him, together with a son and a daughter.



Latest wills

Lord Smith, of Marlow Common, Marlow, Buckinghamshire, left estate valued at £502,101 net.

Lord Terrington, former member of the Stock Exchange, partner in Sheppards and Chase, 1952-80, of Fairfield, Gloucestershire, left estate valued at £200,000 net.

Lady Wakefield, wife of Sir Norman Wakefield, of Brownshill, Stroud, Gloucestershire, left estate valued at £154,321 net.

Lady Fairley of Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, left estate valued at £92,902 net.

Santina Maria Haffkin, of Harrow, Middlesex, left estate valued at £215,751 net.

Freda Bridget Wilson, of Belstead, Ipswich, left estate valued at £2,416,151 net. She left £500 to both Belstead Church and Blaxhall Church.

Anne Banks, of Chorley, Lancashire, left estate valued at

£1,615,220 net. She left £500 to the RSPCA; £200 to the RNIB and to the Parish Church of St George, Chorley.

Thomas George Blumson, of Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire, left estate valued at £1,261,791 net.

Elizabeth Rogers Bull, of Dalington, Northampton, left estate valued at £1,090,827 net.

She left £10,000 to the RNIB and to the National Trust.

Francis Ludwig Carsten, of London, left estate valued at £1,262,123 net.

Raymond Maxwell Ellis, of Eppingham Park, Wolverhampton, left estate valued at £1,138,721 net.

Sylvia Mary Groves, of Erdington, Birmingham, left estate valued at £1,728,135 net.

Florence Mary Hothersall, of

London SW20, left estate valued at £1,053,372 net.

Juliet Nancy Auldjo Jamieson, of Blackwater, Camberley, Surrey, left estate valued at £1,613,741 net.

Brigadier Thomas Neil McKicking, of London W8, left estate valued at £739,650 net.

Gillian Pemberton, of London SW19, left estate valued at £1,174,029 net.

She left £1,000 to St John's Church, Spencer Hill, Wimbledon.

Rachel Dorothy Sharrman, of Lymington, Hampshire, left estate valued at £1,277,774 net.

She left £5,000 to the British Red Cross Society, £1,000 each to British Heart Foundation, Imperial Cancer Research Campaign, RNIB, RNID, Royal UK Beneficent Association,

Abbeyfield Society, Distressed Gentlefolk's Aid Association, Leonard Cheshire Foundation, Council for the Protection of Rural England and the National Trust.

Stephen Carey Steadman, farmer, of Woolston, North Cadbury, Yeovil, Somerset, left estate valued at £1,128,366 net.

Fanny Elizabeth Stevenson, of Yeadon, Leeds, left estate valued at £1,038,686 net.

Nathan Storz, of Hendon, London NW4, left estate valued at £1,073,717 net.

Eileen May Ayliffe Tate, of Bishops Hull, Taunton, Somerset, left estate valued at £1,037,688 net.

Nicola Georgina Taylor, of Llangyndir, Crickhowell, Powys, left estate valued at £1,240,040 net.

Robert Woodhead Wadsworth, of Anlaby, East Yorkshire, left estate valued at £1,136,573 net.

PASSING OF AN 'ENORMOUS NAME'

We now see, though few saw then, that the ship which brought home the body of Napoleon to be laid under the gorgeous dome of the Invalides did in effect bring home his nephew. Meanwhile, this strange, meditative, inscrutable man, dark to others, often, doubtless, to himself, was learning everywhere, everything, in long captivity, in Switzerland and in our Metropolis, he had nothing to do but that which Princes often cannot do—to read, observe, think and learn, and watch the star of his destiny. Within the sphere of thought and feeling the man who can think, and feel, and intend, and design is an autocrat. He wants no advisers; he depends on no informers; he is bound to no agents; he is all in all—the first and last in his mental realm. That was the last Emperor's education, as careful when it depended on himself and Fortune as when an Emperor, a nation, and a Royal mother gave their heart and soul to it. It prepared him for Empire.

ON THIS DAY

January 11, 1873

At the heart of a long article on Louis Napoleon III was embedded one explanation of the Emperor's nephew's failure to match the achievements of his uncle.

but not, as we now see, for Constitutional Government; and not, as we now still more plainly see, for the qualities necessary to success under the overwhelming difficulties of unexpected and unexampled prosperity. It prepared him for plebs and coups d'état, a portfolio teeming with schemes, new maps of Europe, rectified frontiers, wars for ideas, repaid with territory, intrigues, demonstrations, vast material undertakings, and, in all things, a regard to that which pleases the fancy

and meets the eye. It prepared him for the pageant and the scene, but not for the stern realities of all life, whether public or private—not for the successes only attainable by the full tension and continual exercise of the highest moral and mental faculties. A student may learn, a dreamer may have visions, a thinker may arrive at conclusions or collect and arrange ideas; but if they have to spend the best part of their lives out of the action of life, watching, observing, and patiently expecting, they will be sure to find that when the opportunity does arise they cannot deal with men, except as the bloodless creatures of their own ideal world. For 20 years the world saw, with continual misgiving, the outburst of a long pent-up power, the very Summer of Empire full of leaf and flower; the very Autumn ripening everywhere to decay. France was to be dazzled with a succession of grand displays, from the fantastic shows of a Palace, enormous fêtes, unequalled Exhibitions, and the chase itself transformed into a forest masquerade, to wars and threats of war, in which glory was the only prize...

NEWS

Blair supports Cook

Tony Blair appealed to voters to rise above the personal shortcomings of his ministers after Robin Cook's former wife published an intimate and embarrassing account of their failed marriage. The Prime Minister said that British politics was in danger of being relegated to little more than a gossip column, "an extension of Hollywood", if ministers' private lives remained relentlessly under the microscope. Pages 1, 4, 5

Government could pay nurses more

The Government could comfortably afford an above-average pay increase for Britain's nurses, in spite of the threat of economic recession this year, according to City forecasts. The predictions suggest that the Government is heading for a budget surplus of up to £10 billion this year because tax receipts have been far higher than expected. Page 1

Marquess dead

The Marquess of Bristol, who scandalised society with his debauchery and drug abuse, has died suddenly at his Suffolk home, aged 44. Page 1

Europe crisis

Jacques Santer goes before the European Parliament with his 19 commissioners tonight in an attempt to defuse a crisis vote that is certain to inflict heavy political damage. Page 1

Speaker may go

Betty Boothroyd is considering springing a surprise on the Commons by standing down as Speaker before the next election. Page 1

Government relaunch

Senior Cabinet ministers will this week unveil a string of policy initiatives as part of a mini government relaunch designed to wrest the agenda off personalities and onto issues. Page 2

Still smiling

The Irish will be taught to be friendlier in a £250,000 government campaign intended to improve the country's reputation for hospitality. Page 3

Kidnap ordeal

Tense negotiations continued for the release of John Brooke, the kidnapped oil worker, after Yemeni ministers promised Britain they will not use force. Page 3

Tintin, the man of the century

Tintin celebrated his seventieth birthday amid agreement in the French-speaking world on his heroic status and fierce debate over his sexuality and politics. The media devoted much time to a portrayal of the Belgian cartoon character as a figure who towered above the 20th century with just one rival, General Charles de Gaulle. Page 10

Chinese choice

Milton Keynes, best known until now for its concrete cows and American-style shopping malls, has become the most popular destination in Britain for people who left Hong Kong. Page 6

Mother's shock

Maureen Kearney, a 65-year-old grandmother, was in a West Belfast shopping centre when she spotted the man she blames for the killing of her son. Page 7

Out of balance

A group set up at the Government's request to help employees and employers to achieve a better balance between work and family life is threatening to become a major embarrassment. Page 8

Atrocity alert

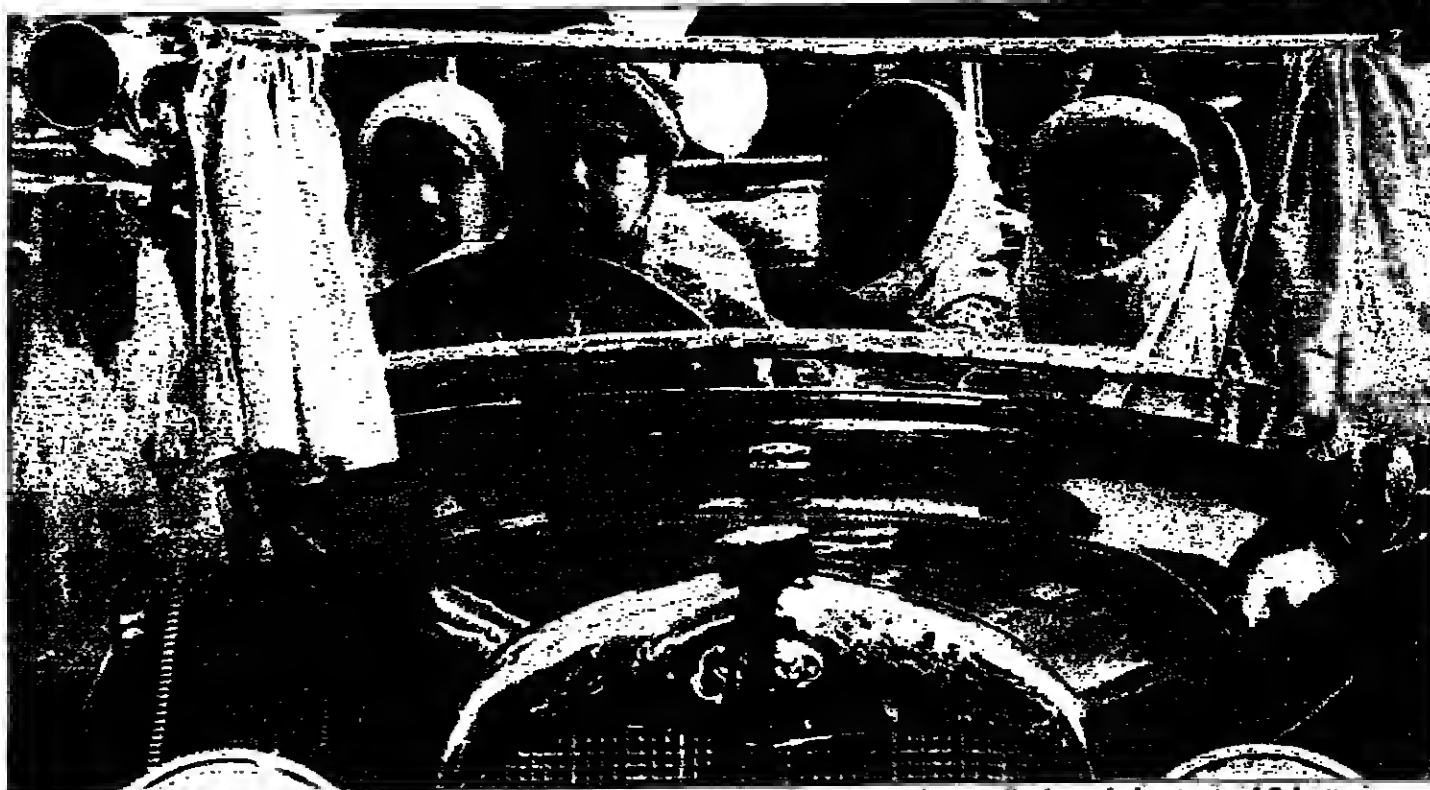
The Indian Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, visited western India in an attempt to curb a wave of atrocities against Christians. Page 9

Clinton DNA test

DNA tests on the 13-year-old Arkansas boy rumoured to be President Clinton's illegitimate son have proved negative. Page 10

Saddam defiant

President Saddam Hussein gained popular support when Iraq's rubber-stamp parliament urged his Government to reject "unjust" UN resolutions. Page 11



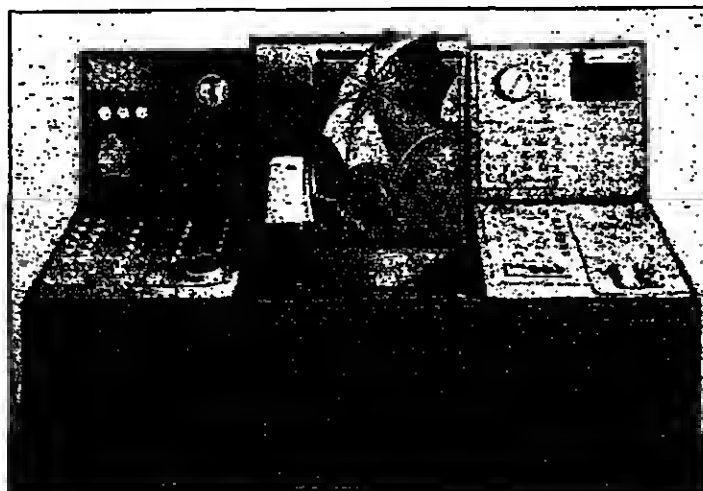
A 1929 4-cylinder Ford joined 150 other vintage cars and motor-cycles in a classic car rally through the streets of Calcutta

Age trap

Ageism should make us angry, Tom Krikwood, professor of biological gerontology, says. "Someone said that we are born copies and develop into originals. Older people's life experience makes them unique." Pages 14, 15

Lisa Armstrong

"In the immediate excitement that greeted Tom Ford's hippy spring collection for Gucci last October, the models' hair seemed a minor footnote. But hair and make-up are never details in a business where a clever cut at the right moment can make a model's career and launch a million imitations." Suddenly it's OK to be a Seventies girl. Pages 16, 17



Hot tickets

From Hollywood to the West End, from the Tate Gallery to the Barbican, Times critics choose their highlights. Pages 18, 19

On film

Warren Beatty stars as a sleazy US Senator in *Bulworth*, while Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman team up to cast a spell in *Practical Magic* and Joseph Fiennes impersonates the Bard in *Shakespeare in Love*. Page 18

At the theatre

Cate Blanchett, Richard Dreyfuss, Rufus Sewell and Klaus Maria Brandauer star on the London stage. Page 18

In the galleries

The Tate's large retrospective of Jackson Pollock looks unmissable, while the Monet exhibition at the Royal Academy is set to be the new year's most popular art show. Page 19

TOMORROW

IN THE TIMES

ARTS

A new label: Brian Griffiths and other artists are leading the way in what's being termed Neurotic Realism. Page 20

LAW

How long before the American-style compensation culture conquers Britain? Page 21

Preview: A new series of *Dad* (BBC1, 8.30pm) Review: *Shooting the Past* was a curate's egg, says Paul Hoggart. Pages 46, 47

The Cook book

The Cabinet would not be the stronger for Mr Cook's departure. One hope around which the Labour leadership should rally is that this thorny but talented minister can bring an end to the time when he has been an understandably distracted man. Page 21

Nursing for nurses

Nursing reform is not only a necessary part of the Government's modernisation project, but also a pressing political need if cries of "crisis" are not to continue to emanate from hospital wards. Page 21

Ever young

Older people are being brought back to the workplace. Their experience enriches us. Page 21

WILLIAM REES-MOGG

The similarity of the psychological dramas of Cook and Clinton is most striking. Cook both sides as a novelist, and ask what is the core of the plot. Page 20

PETER RIDDELL

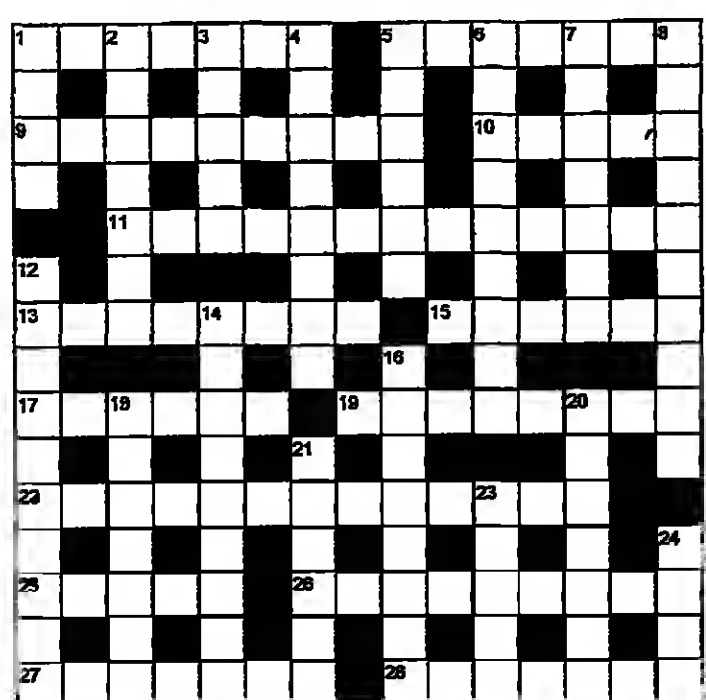
The striking feature of the latest polls is how little impact the Mandelson affair has had on public opinion, not how much. The ratings of Mr Blair and Labour are still much higher than at the last election. Page 20

7th Marquess of Bristol; Sir William Mordaunt, judge of the Right Rev Francis West. Page 23

Christ as Che Guevara advert; call for honesty on euro; Roman dates; Cromwell's eschewer; pig farmers' plight. Page 21

For Washington to make use of a body that has been created by the Security Council of the UN for a specific purpose is not only to thumb one's nose at the world body but to abandon all moral scruples while arguing, cynically, from the moral high ground. — Hong Kong Standard

THE TIMES CROSSWORD NO 20,997



ACROSS

- Go like the clappers? (7)
- Change subject, having no time to relax in lodgings (7)
- A nice long novel suited to one's tastes (9)
- Stage entertainment - originally one an agent rejected (5)
- Facing similar difficulties, like George and Montmorency (2,3,4)
- Continental production of English opera, oddly in a French setting (8)
- Keen to make an impression securing runs (6)
- He's abandoned the children in lots of cells (6)
- First-rate judge takes a wife! It's hard to say (5-3)
- How some may play golf, all day and all night (5,3,5)

DOWN

- Principal male removed from head of procession (4)
- Pair taking in little orphan found in basket (7)
- Spy from army set-up securing information (5)
- Approach requiring energy and method (8)
- Money offered by artist upset model at first (6)
- Change to e.g. crime figures may be described thus (9)
- Something very ugly, such as a spy? (7)
- Will not admit Tory outsiders into this depressed area (10)
- Paper addressed point in support of landlord (10)
- City may be devastated by his sacking (5)
- Plant giving budger, say, a lot of abdominal pain (8)
- Aboard ship, for example, put up with slander and smears (7)
- Coins go into it and notes come out (7)
- Money order that's written in Italian and French (8)
- Bribed picture editor (5)
- Endlessly investigate breeding establishment (4)

The solution of Saturday's Prize Puzzle No 20,996 will appear next Saturday. The five winners will each receive a £20 book token.

Times Two Crossword, page 48

Latest Road and Weather conditions

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Sun rises

Sun rises: 8.02 am Sun sets: 4.14 pm
Moon rises: 12.27 pm Moon sets: 1.49 am

New moon: January 17th

London 4.45 am to 8.02 am
Bristol 4.24 am to 8.12 am
Edinburgh 4.03 am to 8.37 am
Manchester 4.15 pm to 8.20 am
Perthshire 4.42 am to 8.16 am

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General: very cold but mostly dry. Light

furries of sleet or snow in eastern England, most likely towards the North Sea coast.
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Central S & Central N England, Mid-

lands: some wintry showers, mostly dry with some sunny breaks. Wind NE, moderate to fresh. Max 4C (36F).
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Channel Islands, SW & NW England,

Wales, Lake District, Isle of Man: mostly dry with sunny spells. Wind NE, moderate to fresh. Max 5C (41F).
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UK Roads - All regions 0330 444 910

Borders, Edinburgh & Dundee, Aber-

deen, Central Highlands, Moray Firth,
UK Weather - All regions 0330 444 910
UK Roads - All regions 0330 444 910

NE Scotland, Orkney, Shetland: Freezing

fog slowly clearing. Sunny spells. Wind, variable to S. Max 4C (36F).
UK Weather - All regions 0330 444 910
UK Roads - All regions 0330 444 910

SW & NW Scotland, Glasgow, Argyll:

early freezing fog patches, then dry and bright before rain starts moving into the western fringes. Wind S, moderate. Max 4C (36F).
UK Weather - All regions 0330 444 910
UK Roads - All regions 0330 444 910

N Ireland: any early freezing fog slowly

clearing to sunny spells. Cloudier with rain and sleet to west. Wind light and variable. Max 3C (37F).
UK Weather - All regions 0330 444 910
UK Roads - All regions 0330 444 910

Republic of Ireland: frosty start, freezing

fog in places. Some sunshine. Rain with snow on hills in evening. Wind light, variable to strong S. Max 1C (30F).
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Outlook: rain and sunny spells.

UK Weather - All regions 0330 444 910
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24 hrs to 6 pm: b=bright; c=cloud; d=drizzle; ds=drizzle; du=drizzle; f=fog; g=gale; h=halt;

r=rain; sh=showers; sl=sleet; s=sun; t=thunder
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Aberdeen

Sun 0.9 0.02 3 37 sl Leeds 7.1 0.02 3 37
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Aberdeen

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UK Weather - All regions 0330 444 910
UK Roads - All regions 0330 444 910



Changes to chart below from noon: High B remains slow moving. Low H moves NW. Low J deepens NE. Low G fills and drifts E.



TODAY

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UK Weather - All regions 0330 444 910
UK Roads - All regions 0330 444 910

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UNDER THE SKIN OF SPORT

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TWISTNew season,
same old
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PAGE 26

JOHN
HOPKINS
A new column
on golf
PAGE 36

ONE DAY AT A TIME

England begin recovery programme

PAGE 27

ULSTER'S
TRIUMPHIrish spring a
European
surprise

PAGE 35

Ireland

TIMES SPORT 15
PAGES

MONDAY JANUARY 11 1999

CHELSEA MANAGER HAS HARD WORDS FOR PREDECESSOR

Vialli shakes an iron
fist at Gullit's barbsBY OLIVER HOYT
FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT

WITH the gentle assuredness that has become the trademark of his success, Gianluca Vialli, the Chelsea player-coach, poured scorn last night on the continuing efforts of Ruud Gullit, his predecessor, to undermine his achievements. In the process, he emphasised, perhaps unwittingly, the reasons why he has taken Chelsea to heights that the Dutchman never attained.

Vialli, the man who has taken Chelsea from strength to strength since Gullit's abrupt departure from Stamford Bridge 11 months ago, had raised a clenched fist into the air in celebration at St James' Park on Saturday evening after his side had clinched the gritty yet composed 1-0 victory over Gullit's Newcastle United that allowed them to overtake Aston Villa at the top of the FA Carling Premiership.

It was their twentieth league game without defeat, a run that stretches back to August 15, the opening day of the season. It was a game that established a new club record for an unbeaten run, a game that most observers agreed they would never have won during Gullit's tempestuous time at the helm.

Slowly, almost irresistibly, their form is beginning to take its toll on the rest. Villa, still genuine contenders, are slipping a little. Arsenal are beset by injuries and disci-

plinary problems. Manchester United — forced to wait for 45 minutes by a power failure yesterday but comfortably bright enough to beat a poor West Ham United 4-1 at Old Trafford — are now third, but are not yet playing with the fluency of potential champions.

Much of Chelsea's success is to do with the team spirit that Vialli has fostered, the lack of ego that has salvaged the relationship between manager and players that was souring under Gullit.

Those who spent time at Chelsea's training ground at Harlington while Gullit was in charge sensed a feeling that the club might implode at any moment under the pressures of his management style. The mood is lighter and happier but even more professional now that Vialli is in charge.

Those facts notwithstanding, Gullit, who seems increasingly desperate in his straightened circumstances in the North East, chose the aftermath of Newcastle's defeat of Saturday to indulge in another bout of clumsy psychological warfare with Vialli.

Mining the same seam that he had explored on Friday, when he claimed that Vialli had merely copied his methods and used his rotation system, Gullit's bitterness betrayed itself again when he insisted that Chelsea "have to win" the title this season and that there will be "no hiding place" for Vialli if they do not.

TOP OF THE TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chelsea	21	10	10	1	32	17	40
Aston Villa	21	11	7	3	31	20	40
Man Utd	21	10	6	5	34	24	36
Arsenal	21	9	9	3	32	11	36
Leeds	21	9	8	4	34	20	33
Wimbledon	21	8	6	7	29	33	33
Liverpool	21	9	5	7	36	25	32
West Ham	21	9	5	7	25	27	32
Middlesbrough	21	7	10	4	32	26	31
Leicester	21	7	6	8	23	21	29

"If he is trying to be smart, we will not fall for that," Vialli said. "Everyone can say what they think, but it is wrong to say that a team must win the championship. This is a game. It is not a war or something like that. Everybody must do their best, but that is all they can do and I am very pleased with my players after the way they performed against Newcastle."

"We are doing our best. We are getting a few results now and it means that someone is going to have to do well to do better than us. But there is still no question that we have to win the title. We are just pleased because we are back at the top of the table. It is a great feeling to be up there."

"As far as I was concerned, this game was not about Ruud Gullit versus Gianluca Vialli, it was about Newcastle versus Chelsea. Football clubs are not just about one man. Ruud did a great job for Chelsea and when he left, I tried to

continue where he left off, but I did things my way and brought in my own ideas. I will owe something to him if I succeed here, but that is obvious. If he wins the championship with Newcastle, he will owe something to Kevin Keegan and Kenny Dalglish, too."

"I inherited a very good team, but when that happens the pressure is sometimes greater because you have to produce. Sometimes when you take over a bad team, it is easier to do the job. There is more room for improvement."

In all Gullit's assertions about the Chelsea team being his creation, about how Vialli has only made two signings, it has been left unsaid how important those signings were. One of Gullit's great weaknesses was his apparent inability to identify Frank Sinclair as the team's Achilles' heel at right back. Lack of cover for Frank Leboeuf and Michael Duberry at centre back was also a flaw.

Vialli has fixed that with the signings of Albert Ferrer and Marcel Desailly, the World Cup's best defender, and the Chelsea defence, formerly a laughing stock, has conceded fewer league goals than any except Arsenal. In their new player-coach, they have found a man whose substance outweighs his considerable style, not the other way around.

United win, page 29
Football, pages 28-33



Management positions: Vialli acknowledges the Chelsea fans; Gullit broods. Main photograph: Jeff Mitchell



Sealed with a kiss: Petrescu celebrates scoring the winner by kissing Wise, but it was determined defence, as exemplified by Duberry, left, and Leboeuf, that made the difference

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Gascoigne taking tablets to fight off depression

By GEORGE CAULKIN

PAUL GASCOIGNE'S journey from despair to the verge of an international recall has encompassed more than the cutting out alcohol. The rehabilitation of the Middlesbrough midfielder player is being eased by a course of antidepressants, the player revealed yesterday.

"I'm trying to enjoy my football as much as I can. I'm on these tablets which don't make me excited and don't get me down, but sometimes they do affect me in certain games. I hope people will appreciate that," Gascoigne, 31, told Sky Sports News.

"I need to be on them," he said. "Some games I'm not up for it, but as long as I can give it 100 per cent, I'll be honest with the gaffer. If I'm not feeling too good, I won't play because I don't want to let the lads down."

Paul Alcock, the referee who was pushed to the ground by Paulo Di Canio, the Sheffield Wednesday striker, in September, expects to be back in action in the FA Cup Premier-ship by the end of this month. Alcock, whose existing back complaint was exacerbated by the Italian's shove, will have a scan today after four weeks of rest and is hopeful he will receive the all clear.

Geoff Thompson, the acting chairman of the Football Association, pledged yesterday to rebuild bridges with Uefa, football's European governing body. He admitted that relations were damaged last year when the FA changed its vote in the election for the new Fifa chairman, backing Sepp Blatter instead of Lennart Johansson, the Uefa president.

Juninho, the Brazil midfielder player, says that Aston Villa would be his "first choice" club if he decides to return to England from Atletico Madrid. Gianni Paladini, Juninho's agent, indicated that the player would be willing to reduce his wage demands.

Oscar Garcia, the Barcelona striker, said yesterday that although he understood Chelsea were interested in signing him, he would prefer to stay with the Catalan club and fight for his place.

Festive break prompts an avalanche of goals in overseas leagues

Europe offers refresher course

ROB HUGHES



Overseas View

AT Old Trafford, the lights went out, probably through exhaustion, following England's habit of playing so many games either side of Christmas. In Italy, Spain, and even down in the Cape, there is evidence of the benefits of giving a man a break.

The holiday refreshed goal-scoring in Serie A so much that Cagliari beat AS Roma 4-3. Parma won 6-3 away to Piacenza and, ominously for Manchester United, who face Internazionale in the quarter-finals of the European Cup in March, Ronaldo, Roberto Baggio and Ivan Zamorano were in joyous mood against Venezia.

Just a month ago, cynics were saying that it was all over for Ronaldo. Inter gave him time off in Rio, with instructions to prepare himself, body and soul, for United in the spring. Apparently, he cannot wait. After three minutes yesterday, Ronaldo scored a penalty. After 71 minutes, he scored from free play and, in between, he frolicked while Baggio struck once and Zamorano hit a hat-trick. Inter won 6-2 and the cases of the world dropped off Ronaldo's shoulders.

The 60,000 crowd in the San Siro believed that they were witnessing a revival. Parma followers felt the same as Abel Balbo, their veteran Argentina striker, also notched three goals in Parma's storming victory. Roberto Muzzi, once of Roma, scored twice for Cagliari against his old team.

Alas for David Platt, his Sampdoria side did not catch the new year habit. Platt's first signing, Lee Sharpe, from Leeds United, was a second-half substitute, but Sampdoria



Zamorano, of Internazionale, is held aloft by Ronaldo, his team-mate, while on his way to a hat-trick against Venezia

failed to capitalise on the fact that Bologna played virtually the entire second half with ten men and finished level at 1-1. Juventus achieved the same score at home to Bari and AC Milan equalised with seven minutes to spare at Empoli, although Christian Ziege, Milan's saviour, received his second yellow card of the game for his excessive celebrations.

For Ken Bates — after a weekend in which he acknowledged that the Football Association is not ready to take him as its chairman — the good, good news is that Juventus does not want anyone from Stamford Bridge either. There had been speculation that Gianluca Vialli was the choice to replace Marcello Lippi as the coach this summer, but Umberto Agnelli, the Bates of Juventus, suggested that Carlo Ancelotti, the man who sold Gianfranco Zola to Chelsea from Parma, will be the man.

Coaches come and coaches go. Bruce Grobelaar, the former Liverpool goalkeeper, who was cleared of match-fixing two years ago, has begun his transition from entertainer to trainer. He begins work this

week as the manager of Seven Stars, of South Africa's Premier Soccer League, and, having turned 40, Grobelaar will relish being a free man in the country of his birth.

trovery. Now Gil, the mayor of Marbella, is in prison accused of embezzling £2 million from the Marbella town hall for Atletico.

"Everything is fine," Gil said, sarcastically. "I'm relaxed. I'm going to jail. This way, the lynching campaign against me is over."

While he suffers, his lawyer protests that others at Atletico did the deal, which put the Marbella name on Atletico shirts without Gil's knowledge. The club offered free entry to their Primera League game against Extremadura yesterday as a "Gil is innocent" demonstration. Some fans went instead to the Spanish Football Association to daub slogans and smash windows and presidents of four rival clubs — Real Betis, Real Valladolid, Real Mallorca and Sevilla — were subpoenaed to give evidence before the judge.

There were smiles in Catalonia, where the Barcelona president, Josep Lluís Núñez, sought his pound of flesh for Gil's latest outburst, insisting that Barcelona "bought off" referees. Núñez is having a ball because his team has scored ten goals in two league games, with Rivaldo scoring four of them.

So, Rivaldo is happy. Ronaldo is happy, but one Brazilian player who is not happy and whose agent would rather he plays in England, is Juninho. His problem is not the president but the coach at Atletico, Arrigo Sacchi, and Juninho's agent says that the little Brazilian would like a return flight to England, not back to Middlesbrough, but to Aston Villa.

Meanwhile, one captive viewer — Gil — saw Real Madrid, his club's greatest rivals, succumb 2-1 on television in Mallorca. It was a wretched evening for Manuel Sanchis, whose own goal and later dismissal allowed Mallorca to consolidate their position at the top of the table. It was a delight for Dani — alias Daniel Garcia Lara — for whom Real Madrid paid Zaragoza £1 million and off-loaded without giving him one full match.

"Beating Real Madrid was a big motivation for me," Dani said. "Mallorca is the best thing that has happened to me because Hector Cuper is a great coach, who recognises my abilities. One man's fulfilment is another's failure."

Hibernian gain from consistent displays of flying Finn

By PHIL GORDON

EVEN Mixu Paatelainen would nod in agreement that he is not worthy of lacing George Best's boots, never mind the great man's boots. However, the Finland striker is proving that he is far more capable hangover cure.

Best's flirtation with Hibernian 19 years ago was a bitter-sweet cocktail of sellout crowds and relegation, but he failed to stick around when the Edinburgh club last embraced the Scottish League first division in 1980. Instead, the world's most charismatic winger, who was flown up to Scotland every Friday night and paid an unheard-of £1,000 a game, was off on another flight of fancy, leaving others to pick up the pieces.

Hibernian returned to the premier division then at the first attempt and, 19 years on, they seem certain to complete the task equally quickly. Paatelainen's ninth goal since his transfer from Wolverhampton Wanderers four months ago launched the 2-1 success away to St Mirren on Saturday, stretching Hibernian's lead at the top to 11 points.

Unlike Best's day, there is no longer any margin for error for those demoted from Scotland's top division: only the first division champions gain promotion. Hibernian — and Paatelainen — are ensuring that the margin is as wide as possible.

They dwarf the rest of the division, not just in finances (from crowds of more than 14,000 are ensuring that the harsh realities of life outside the Scottish Premier League are being kept at bay) but in tradition, though it is unlikely that the achievement of Alex McLeish's side in extending its unbeaten run to 18 games will be earned a large chapter in the history of a club that has been champion of Scotland four times and reached the semi-finals of the very first European Cup in 1956.

Yet Paatelainen recognises that such scale, even in the Liffordian environment of the Scottish first division, carries problems. "Hibs are the team everyone wants to beat in this division," he said, reflecting on a success earned despite Steve Crawford being dismissed in the 43rd minute, to the delight of a hostile Love Street crowd.

"It was the same when I was in the English first division with Bolton and Wolves. You become a target when you are with a bigger club, but I would rather have this sort of pressure than be with a struggling side."

The Finland player's sublime 51st-minute goal, finishing off a fine move with Russell Latapy, another recent acquisition, from FC Porto, by thrashing in a left-foot shot from 20 yards, was embellished by a late goal from Paul Hartley, the substitute, purchased before Christmas.

Paatelainen's debut for Hibernian came on the same ground in September, when St Mirren won 2-0, but, as the success on Saturday indicated, it is not just personnel that has changed since then.

"There is more confidence now," he explained. "I think there was still a hangover from relegation, but this was an important result and it could turn out to be one of the key games."

The ambitions of Falkirk, in second place, receded when Derek Holmes's last-minute goal provided Raith Rovers with a precious 2-1 win, yet an even greater cost was being counted by the seven other home clubs forced to postpone lower-division fixtures because of frozen pitches. The Premier League's shutdown now appears to be very timely.

Ford ensures Mansfield stay on the right road

By RICHARD HOBSON

Mansfield Town 3
Brentford 1

IF BRENTFORD arrived at Field Mill with a superiority complex, as Ron Noades, the manager, appeared to suggest afterwards, then they should have left with a less flattering self-assessment. Riding on the emotion of Tony Ford's record 824th league appearance, Mansfield Town proved to be superior in every aspect to record a fifth successive home win.

The first crowd beyond 4,000 this season helped to create a slightly surreal atmosphere at a ground that is badly in need of redevelopment. Midway through the first half, Kerr almost scored for Mansfield with a scorpion kick — the skill demonstrated memorably by René Higuita, the Colombia goalkeeper, at Wembley a few years ago — while Ford, sprinting up and down the right flank like a colt rather than a 39-year-old veteran, was cheered even after being caught offside.

It was a memorable day and the result made it even better," Ford, a credible figure, said. The nearest that he came

to scoring, an optimistic volley from some 25 yards, soared well wide, but his influence was immense during an opening half-hour in which Mansfield endorsed their credentials for promotion from the Nationwide League third division.

Importantly, they crowned this period of domination with goals. In the twelfth minute, Lorrain took advantage of indecision by Hirdarsson to meet a long clearance by Bowling before chipping over Dearden. Three minutes later, Ford's low cross eluded the whole defence and Harper, arriving at the far post, extended the lead at the second opportunity. Brentford reduced the arrears when a dreadful mistake by Schofield a minute before half-time enabled Owusu a free run, which he took full advantage of to score.

Yet, despite the runs from defence of Hirdarsson, Mansfield created the better chances in the second half and Christie, a substitute, duly scored a third goal near the end.

"If you think a game is going to be easy and you give less than 100 per cent, then you are going to struggle," Noades said.

Just a single point now separates three clubs — Brentford, Cambridge United and Mansfield — behind Cardiff City, the leaders, and Ford carries promotion for the fourth time in his career exactly 20 seasons after the first, at Grimsby Town. "Brentford have spent a lot of money on their team, so to play good football and beat them shows how we are coming on," he said.

MAANSFIELD TOWN (3-2-1) Bowling — M Peters, J Schofield, W Hirdarsson — T Ford (sub), L Williams, Y Jones, O Kerr, J Walker, G Talbot, S Harper — L Pearce, T Lorrain (sub), L Christie (89).

BRENTFORD (4-3-3) K Davidson — O Powell, R Quinn, H Hirdarsson, I Anderson (sub), G O'Halloran, M Rowley, S Lorrain, G Mahon — D Bryn Jones, L Fortune, West, sub: L Owens, A Scott, R Williams, B Jordan.

Ford: sprinting like a young colt

Jeff Wood gave Ford a flying start with a fine turn and shot, but Kidsgrove replied with panache. Scott Dundas equalising from the penalty spot and then sprinting clear to beat Chapman, who, moments earlier, had denied Batho with a magnificent one-handed paw of a save as the forward tried to chip him.

Ford roared back after half-time. Lord scored with a shot that went in off a defender's heel and added his second with a left-foot thump that bounced in off the underside of the bar. Dundas struck a swerving 30-yard shot that hit the bar before Reilly forced home a flick-out from a corner to stretch Ford's lead.

Then their troubles began. With 20 minutes to go, Lord

was sent off after an altercation with Dundas. Elliott reorganised. The goalmouth incidents intensified. Chapman once dropped the ball on his line and only undignified scrambling kept it out.

Beck was then shown a second yellow card and dismissed after a flare-up in the area. "It was mistaken identity," Elliott said. "The linesman got the wrong man." Mountford headed wide of an open goal and Batho, standing at the far post, contrived a clearing header when all he needed was to let the ball run off him into the net.

The roar of triumph and the rattle of the metal cage from the last man down the tunnel. Chapman, the player-chairman, spoke volumes of the

emotion generated by Ford's nine men holding on for their victory.

The FA Cup run that took Ford to Preston North End left more than £10,000 in the bank towards the dream of laying an astronaut pitch. Swelling the coffers by reaching Wembley in the Vase is unlikely, Elliott admits. He has a small squad and it will be stretched making up the backlog of matches in pursuit of the Ryman League third division title.

FORD UNITED (3-4-3) J Chapman — L Fowler, T Beck, R Gordon — D Reilly, T Hughes (sub), B Watts, T Grant, M Lord (sub), sub: M White (sub), S Munday, P Wood, D Hadding.

KIDSGROVE ATHLETIC (4-4-2) S Batho — E Evans — O Jones, S Dundas, W Mountford (sub), sub: S Dundas, P Kelly — O Hickey, R Batho.

Referee: S Tormin.

Ford survive brace of red cards

By WALTER GAMMIE

Ford United 4
Kidsgrove Athletic 2

A TRYING week for Dennis Elliott ended happily on Saturday. It was his birthday and his Ford United side marked the occasion by beating last season's losing semi-finalists to reach the last 16 of the FA Carlsberg Vase at Rush Green Road.

Elliott responded to the departure of Paul Downes, his assistant, and all but Steve Brice of his coaches by laying out the kit, pumping up footballs and then inspiring Ford to a tigerish performance against the North Western Trains League champions.

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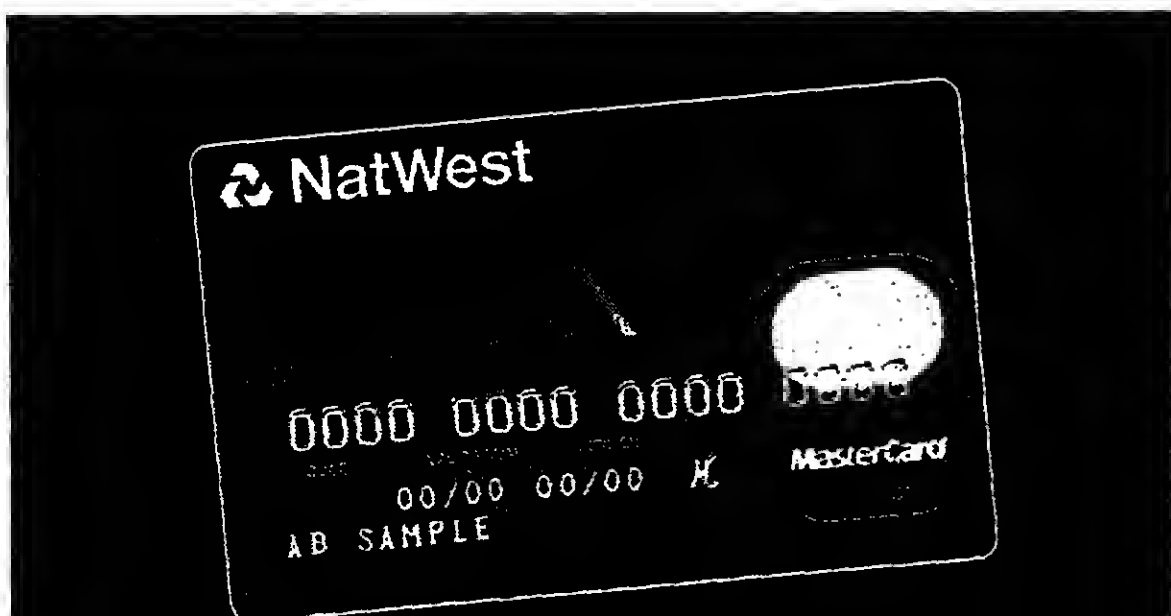
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BBC hit the bull's eye with two scribbling ladies

There was a pleasant bar at the main Press Centre at the Olympic Games in Atlanta. By one of those rum quirk of faith, you only found British journalists inside it. Occasionally, we remarked on this. "The British are not the only drinking journalists," one of our number said. "Somewhere very near here there is a bar being drunk dry by the Dutch."

It is not the tradition of alcohol that is unique, because an awful lot of nations do that. It is the tradition of standing up drinking beer and, as Eric Bristow himself so rightly pointed out, but you can never take the pub out of darts. Which meant that it was inevitable that, in time, the British hegemony in the world of darts would be ceded to the Dutch.

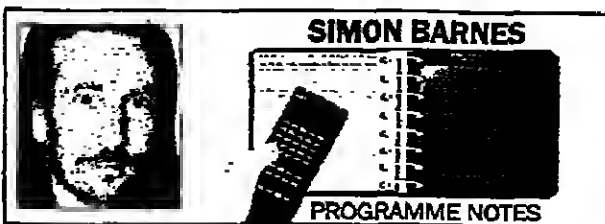
Ray Barneveld is not exactly an exoticism. He would not stand out in any pub in Britain: just another busy man valiantly not pretending that he isn't going bald. He looks to be no stranger to his country's best-known export, the one that comes in green tins.

Various sports have what you might call the "world series syndrome", a world championship fought for by a single nation. In this country, the world championships of snooker and darts are seldom contested, still less won, by any non-Brit. But now we have Barney and his follow-

ers: one whiff of a Dutch success anywhere in the world, and the television screen turns bright orange.

There is generally an air of great good humour and festival when the Dutch have a decent sporting run on their hands and descend upon it in numbers. Besides, the Dutch and the Brits have always rather got on. This is not true of the Brits and the French — I suspect it is because the French insist on doing their drinking sitting down. It will be a while before we have a French world champion at darts.

Run thing, darts. There are plenty of sports in which television gives you a better view, but with darts, television gives you the only view. True, the



Lakeside Country Club has been packing in 1,200 people a session for the Embassy world championships, which concluded last night, but no one there can see what is going on. The actual sporting part of darts is only comprehensible on television: specifically, only in their unique, split-screen master-shot, with the relevant area of board on one side and the face of the player on the other. If the sport has a fascination, it is one that it shares with golf. It is about the influence of the opponent on a player's closed skills. A closed skill, in sporting jargon, is a skill that — physically, anyway — your opponent cannot interfere with. A golf shot: a dart throw: a triple-salchow: a clear round: sport is full of examples of closed skills. In golf, in darts,

in skating, in showjumping, opponents are not allowed to tinkle, but they can affect the opposition with their poise, their presence, their performance. That is how darts works: the excellence of one player will force another into error, or, sometimes, into greater excellence. A 140 is followed by an embarrassing 41 — or by a 180.

But the BBC television coverage has lost all faith with the actual action. Cut-aways rule. There are more cut-aways than action shots: fans cheering, fans looking disappointed, fans drinking. And, especially, the cameras home in on the narrowed faces of tortured and traumatised women. These are the wives of the play-

ers: in agony, not just because they married a darts player — a tough enough break, in all conscience — but also because their man is now up there pinging in the 180s. Or not, of course.

One of the semi-finals had that important aspect of any darts tournament: a really quite incredibly fat person. This was Andy "The Viking" Fordham: a beard, long hair and an unfortunate upward-looking camera angle that made the most of his over-stated mammary development.

Fordham moves with the delicate, finicky grace you often find in the truly obese. And then a cut-away to The Viking's mum, in anguish as her little lad lost the plot. And then

— my favourite this — a cut-away to two middle-aged ladies in glasses, wearing identical blue waistcoats and scribbling furiously with identical pencils.

Who were they? Were they adding up the bar takings? Playing bingo, or battle ships? Composing music, or poetry? I adore the fact that the camera turned to them at least half-a-dozen times in two hours of television and each time the ladies were doing exactly the same thing — scribbling away and looking through their glasses — and no one ever mentioned them, still less, explained them. Darts is an area of life that is not exactly chock full of mystery: it was good television to make good that lack.

Houllier's men spook mischievous souls who turned up for a laugh at their expense

Defenders of the faith spoil the fun

Given the number of times that I've seen Liverpool's defenders picked out for special mournful attention by Alan Hansen on *Match of the Day*, it was quite a strange experience watching them play on Saturday at Highbury. How odd that in real life Phil Babb, Steve Staunton and Jamie Carragher are not (every ten seconds or so) freeze-framed hopelessly out of position and circled in white.

It was a cruel disappointment. Sometimes you go to football for mischievous spirit: you want to see for yourself just how bad the Liverpool defence is. You want to have a fine old laugh at David James. So, when the whole visiting team-play as a defensive wall, locking hands across the pitch and performing the football equivalent of the cygnet dance in *Swan Lake* — I have to say it removes a substantial slice of the pleasure.

Still, football support is all about observing trends and remarking the story of what's going on. The strengths and weaknesses of Liverpool were sufficiently well-known to be rather boring, after all: on Saturday, Gerard Houllier certainly made his team the talking point, by doing something supremely out of the ordinary, to lay the ghost of Roy Evans. A defensive triumph, plus Paul Ince wasn't sent off and Michael Owen didn't score. It was special.

Meanwhile, Arsene Wenger's team performed more or less as you would predict. Despite the substitutions caused by injury, Arsenal's roundhead defence was solid and strong: its cavalier midfield was thrilling, curly-haired and inventive, and its pathetic forwards, feckly wrote poetry with big feathers while coughing blood into a hankie.

LYNNE TRUSS



Same old, same old, as you might say. Take Marc Overmars. He raced about tirelessly and devotedly, doing the work of five men: a loosened bandage flapped unregarded at his injured knee. And why? Because he can't play any other way. He sprints, turns, sprints, beats a defender, turns, sprints towards the corner. Does his tongue really hang out like a sheepdog's, or do I imagine it? One thing is sure: if Overmars were a real sheepdog, he'd be the worthy star of a series of animal-hero movies. They could call him Dutch Sprint, turn, race, wool.

"Fetch the dynamite out of the mine-shaft, Dutch", they'd say, and off he'd go at breakneck speed. You can just see him. His legs a blur, he circles back to collect a baby from a blazing shack, emerging singing around the ears. Wool, wool. Well done, Dutch Here's a bone. Music swells. (The end.)



HALO, HALO: the boys in bubbles were noticeably absent on Saturday night, so, for those who missed them, here are Harkness and Heggen in more familiar guises



But, as I mentioned, Arsenal's story isn't changing much at the moment. There is a regular trickle of success, but the triumph is mainly empty of pride, because something Dennis-shaped is missing. Every few weeks, Dennis Bergkamp appears to be fit and able to play — and then it turns out that he isn't, or wasn't, or isn't now, anyway. Hopes rise cautiously, level out for a bit, falter, and then sink again. One wonders how long a player known for changing the course of games can sustain such a reputation without actually playing. Meanwhile, Nicolas Anelka, Luis Boa Morte and Christopher Wreh fall about aimlessly in a kind of limbo, taking it in turns to strike comically wide of goal, as if there's no point trying until Dennis's Second Coming.

So Arsenal dominated on Saturday, but couldn't score. Meanwhile, Liverpool huddled together

at the back (attractive in yellow), and occasionally shot the ball forward, over everybody's heads, to Owen, who couldn't score either.

Owen's best chance required him to use a left foot (which he doesn't have). It's a well-known fact, apparently, that when Owen's little face clouds over with concentration as he rockets towards goal at St Etienne, scattering Argentinian defenders like skittles, he is not asking himself: "Mum, which foot shall I use?" as I always supposed. When it boils down to it, amazingly, he's only got the one.

How could such a frustrating afternoon be made worse for a sensation-seeker? Well, interestingly, by two French coaches good-

naturally patting each other on the back at the press conference and rehearsing an array of affirmative abstract nouns. I don't know why this was so annoying, but it was.

Liverpool's composure, character and discipline in defence were admired by both men: strength, solidity, blab, blab, blab, composure, discipline. Houllier declared that he didn't mind a bit of tension between his players, as it was a sign of "mental toughness". Which is nonsense, of course, since tension (ie, fighting) usually arises between people who are volatile and stupid. But you somehow cannot deny that "tension is a sign of mental toughness" sounds quite philosophical when

delivered in a cultured French accent with a complacent smile.

Meanwhile, Wenger was not only supportive of Houllier but determinedly uncritical of Liverpool's niggardly performance. "We cannot ask our opponents to play a certain way," he shrugged. "I don't want to judge what other teams do. They set you a problem and you must solve it. I have to respect what they did." Having enough antagonism on his plate at the moment, perhaps Wenger was simply being prudent in not stirring more controversy.

Will they remain chums? If one may borrow an outmoded argot from Popeye Doyle in *The French Connection*, having been Prog One for so long in English football, how does it feel for Wenger to face the possible threat of demotion to Prog Two? Houllier is not only turning his team round, but is personable and clever. He is evidently the ac-

ademic type we, at first, mistook Wenger for. He has a twinkly eye and says interesting, epigrammatic things like: "Sometimes a shower is beneficial." At the risk of a pun, Arsene, is this galling?

Meanwhile, spare a thought for the production team at *Match of the Day*, left with a batch of unused Liverpool-defender circles. "You'll be wanting these, Alan!" they said, handing them over and counting them out. "One for Staunton, four for Babb..."

"Not today, boys," was the baffling, brusque Scottish reply. What to do with a dozen redundant graphics? Cheerful types, doubtless they wore them on their heads as halos. They played hoopla in the camera. They juggled four at a time. But it must have been hard to forget that something strange had happened. The boys in the bubbles had escaped their destiny at last.

'Tension usually is between volatile, stupid people'

SPORTS LETTERS

Clubs should punish cheats

From Mr W. A. Watson
Sir, Arsene Wenger complains (report, January 1) about the "divers and cheats" and adds his name to the weekly list of managers who continue to be referees. The standard of refereeing is probably at a low ebb and Wenger, Ferguson, Strachan et al are both correct and justified in bemoaning the level of cheating that is entering the game as never before. They are wrong, however, in blaming the hapless referee. It is not the referees who are cheating but the players. The individual managers are in charge of the team and it is therefore surely reasonable to expect the buck to rest on the manager's desk.

Instead of complaining about opposing players and referees week after week, it is time that these highly-paid apologists and complainers did their job properly. If they are so concerned about cheating, will they discipline their own guilty players? I suspect not, but I put this proposition forward as an open letter to all league managers (Premier-ship or otherwise) to have the courage to go into print and confirm that they will take action against their own players in this way.

If there are no takers to my invitation, I must pose the simple question — why?

Yours faithfully,
W. A. WATSON,
22 Ashby Road, Kegworth, Derby DE14 2DH.

From Mr Ian Todd
Sir, Arsene Wenger is right to decry cheating by players, but there is a simpler, if less likely, way of curbing this than asking the FA Premier League to view a video of every game.

The message that Wenger preaches would be more effectively delivered by his own brethren. There is no reason why Alan Curtisley should not impose an equivalent internal discipline by dropping Redfern for the next game. Similarly, Vialli might drop Leboeuf in their joint acknowledgement that he was lucky to escape a red card. The Corinthian ethos will be more telling if delivered by the player's own employer than some neutral third party.

In contrast, Wenger is wrong in his defence of Vieira. Surely the point of impact is irrelevant. The critical factor is the use and manner of delivery of the elbow.

Yours faithfully,
IAN TODD,
Chairman, Supporters' Clubs Federation,
8 Wyke Close,
Isleworth TW7 5PE.

Need to support Britain's young athletes

From Mr Nic Gault
Sir, It was a real new year tonic to read David Powell's piece on the excellent work of the Ron Pickering Memorial Fund in supporting young athletes (Champions who benefit in the long run, January 4). However, more support of this kind is needed urgently if we are going to continue to produce world-beating athletes, especially in the build-up to the Sydney Olympic Games next year.

Barclaycard research into the funding of British sportspeople revealed that athletes receive just half of the funding that they actually need to compete successfully with their international rivals and that three out of five athletes believe

Iniquity of cricket toss

From Mr Michael Joseph
Sir, I have read that the counties are proposing a change in the toss so that the visiting side has the choice in order to compensate for home ground knowledge and advantage.

Cricket is a game of complex skills and it seems inequitable that, in a Test series, the toss should play such a significant part. If tossing a coin does involve a special skill, it would be useful if it was introduced without delay into our captain's training manual.

Why cannot the rules be changed so that the toss is decisive for the first game in a series of, say, five matches and then the choice alternates, with a further toss for the fifth game?

Yours sincerely,
MICHAEL JOSEPH,
Hollyhurst,
Church Street,
Hampton Lucy CV35 8BE.

Cynical fouls

From Mr Jeffrey Morgan
Sir, In football the sending-off is supposed to be the ultimate deterrent to the cynical professional foul, but, on the evidence of recent years, it is obviously not having the desired effect.

Statistical analysis of the games in which a player has been sent off shows that playing with only ten men is not a great disadvantage. It may hinder the attacking play of the penalised side, but it does not, for a variety of reasons, make it much easier for the full-strength side to score.

Defensive players, when deciding whether or not to bring

Minority sports

From Mr A. Copley
Sir, I fly radio control and free flight electric model aeroplanes and am not sure that David Powell is correct in stating (December 31) that these minority sports deserve a wider acclaim. One of the advantages and pleasures is the limited general coverage. There are plenty of monthly magazines,

I appreciate that the winning of the toss is not an automatic step to success and weather vagaries can upset the best calculations, but at least the heavy element of luck that exists at present would be largely eliminated.

Yours sincerely,
M. S. JOSEPH,
33 York Terrace West,
NW1 4QA.

Ashes strategy

From Mr R.N.G. Stone
Sir, Though the other proposals likely to be debated by the International Cricket Council last week are to be resisted, there is one (report, January 2) that sounds most attractive: apparently, the Asian bloc will propose "a retrospective life ban on Shane Warne and Mark Waugh".

I cannot imagine what this would mean, but if it entails that all Warne's wickets and all Waugh's runs in their careers to date are to be discounted, and the results of the Tests in which they played adjusted accordingly, then by next week England will be in possession of the Ashes. How can Lord MacLaurin of Knebworth possibly vote against?

Yours faithfully,
R.N.G. STONE,
92 Foxwell Street,
Worcester,
WR5 2ET.

This week in THE TIMES



Tomorrow: After their winning start against Australia yesterday, England's one-day cricketers take on Sri Lanka, the world champions.

Wednesday: FA Cup third-round replays — can Kevin Keegan's expensive away defeat Southampton at Craven Cottage?

Thursday: Golf's European Tour begins — where else? — in Cape Town. John Hopkins on the 1st tee looks ahead to the coming season.

Football Saturday: Match by match previews of the Premiership, plus football's finest team of columnists — Frank Leboeuf on life at the top of the league, Danny Baker, Robert Elms and Alyson Rudd.

David Hands, rugby correspondent, sees the French champions beaten in style at Ravenhill

Red hand of history beckons for Ulster

A way with the politics, with those whose narrow views encompass profit and not sport. This was one of the great days in rugby's history, when the breath of a passionate crowd of 20,000 drove their white-shirted heroes to a 33-27 victory that few had envisaged and which could yet do the same when Ulster play Colonisers in the European Cup final at Lansdowne Road on January 30.

This is not a great Ulster team: two of the province's locks of considerable stature, Paddy Johns and Jeremy Davidson, ply their trade elsewhere, their scrum struggled throughout at Ravenhill on Saturday, they were down to their last centre, and Sheldon Coulter and Andy Park, their wings, are not even assured of their club places at Ballymena. But come the hour and the XV became an expression of the longing of a community, not just in Ulster but from all over Ireland.

Observers there speak of a sporting void, most recently occupied by Jack Charlton's football team in the Republic but now waiting to be filled. Rugby could do it, if an Ireland team can sustain its acknowledged ability to achieve more than just famous but isolated victories. Ulster, Ireland's first European finalists, have shown that they can: from poor beginnings, they have won seven successive matches, three of them against the cream of French club rugby, Toulouse (twice) and now Stade Français.

"What Europe has done for us is to destroy the mystique of French rugby," Donal Lenihan, the Ireland team manager, said. Within eight days, Lenihan will be able to judge whether that is truly so: a week after Ulster's final against Colonisers (who beat an injury-ravaged Perpignan 10-6 in Toulouse), Ireland play France in the Five Nations Championship, also at Lansdowne Road, a fixture that they have not won since 1983.

They will surely do so with David Humphreys at fly-half. The little Dungannon man, captain in the regrettable absence of Mark McCall—to whose off-field leadership Humphreys paid tribute—showed all the wit and tactical acumen apparently lacking in the Ireland back division. His try, three minutes after half-time, was at once a statement of intent and a brilliantly-executed play that proved to be a turning point in the game.

It also demonstrated that Ulster were not there only to disrupt but also to play constructive rugby. Stade Français, the French champions and blessed with outstanding players throughout the team, were



Mason, who kicked 20 points for his team, celebrates the victory that put Ulster into the final of the European Cup. Photographs: Mike Cooper/Allsport

reminiscent of Brive in the final of last season against Bath, when the Frenchmen lost their collective tactical sense; for a fortnight, Stade had prepared for a day of wind and rain and muddy going, yet, when they discovered sunshine and a firm ground, a player as experienced as Diego Dominguez fell down.

His side could have won the game through the forwards: of their three tries, the first came from a pushover scrum, the others from a maul after a close-range lineout. All Dominguez had to do was ensure that the game was played around the Ulster 22 and kick the goals that followed; but he knew he had good backs and dwelled too long on the ball before using them, leaving a midfield that Ulster had identified as not having the spiest hands in the

world to be cluttered by the voracious Jan Cunningham. The English-speakers among the Stade players admitted that there had been a loss of equilibrium as the game continually edged away from them. There was an inclination

to blame marginal decisions by Jim Fleming, the referee, that erred towards Ulster, but the statistics show that to be no excuse: having been critical of the match arrangements and persuaded European Rugby Cup Ltd (ERC) to

change the match-day from a Friday night to Saturday, Stade had every reason to believe that their ambition of becoming European champions could be realised. "But the crowd were so close to us, they were so passionate, there

was no way we could let them down, never mind ourselves," Humphreys said. "Over the last two or three months, people have come to see us as spectators and gone away supporters." Such backing proved to be inspirational for forwards such as Mark Blair and Stephen McKinty, the veteran, who claimed the first try after rolling round the front of a lineout.

Yet no player did more to win the game than Simon Mason, the full back, who rose to fame at Newcastle and Orrell, then struggled with Richmond. In Ulster, he has found assurance and goal-kicking of the utmost security: 20 points were added to his 196 points scored in 15 previous games this season, among them an assertive dropped goal early on that punished a wayward clearance by Dominguez.

Nevertheless, few would have taken victory for granted when Ulster turned round leading only 11-10. It was, it seemed, only a question of time before the Stade forwards took a stranglehold, until Humphreys slipped to the blind side of a scrum and popped a perfect chip-kick over the defence. Coulter took it on the full, drew the cover and fed Humphreys on the outside, the fly half beating Christophe Moni in a 45-metre sprint to the line.

Instantly, Ulster unleashed another move that released Park into space; the wing chipped too, Viars was gobbled up on his own line and penalised for not releasing the ball. Mason's penalty goal gave Ulster ten points in as many minutes and, when Humphreys snapped over another dropped goal, the crowd could scarcely believe it.

But Stade came once to within four points of Ulster, once to within three and, at 30-27 with 12 minutes remaining, a final place was less than secure. Then Mason, from 44 metres, drilled over his fifth penalty goal and, against inspired Ulster tackling, French cohesion and the chance of a match-winning try and conversion faded on the triumphant cheers echoing up to the Castleknock Hills.

SCORELINE: Ulster: Tries: McKinty (18m), Humphreys (43). Conversions: Mason. Penalty goals: Mason 5 (4, 49, 66, 66, 73). Dropped goals: Mason 2. Stade: Tries: Julien 2 (31, 53), Levesmont (69). Conversions: Dominguez 3. Penalty goals: Dominguez 2 (12, 50).

SCORING SEQUENCE: Ulster (try): 3-0, 6-0, 6-3, 11-3, 11-10 (full-time), 16-10, 21-10, 24-10, 24-17, 24-20, 27-20, 30-20, 30-27, 30-27.

ULSTER: S. Mason, S. Coulter, J. Cunningham, J. Ball, A. Park, D. Humphreys, A. Macdonald, J. Fitzpatrick, A. Clarke, R. Irwin (capt), G. Leslie, S. McKinty, M. Blair, G. Lorys, S. McKinty, A. Ward, A. McInerney (res), D. Topping, 73.

STADE FRANCAIS: S. Viars, A. Gomes, R. Courtois, C. Moni, T. Lumbard (res), F. Combe, P. de Villiers, H. Chollard, D. George, C. Moni, R. Pook-Jones (res), M. Levesmont, 60, C. Julien, 60, 60.

Two critical meetings this week could help shape the future of European competition: Brian Balster, the chairman of the Rugby Football Union's management board, and Francis Baron, his chief executive, are due to meet French federation officials in Paris today, while, on Friday, representatives of the English and French clubs meet.

They will do so in an atmosphere on the French side that is less than enamoured of ERC, the present tournament organisers. There is a belief among the leading French clubs, not obviously justified by results, that the organisers have learnt over backwards to help home-union teams and the French, whose existing participation agreement ends this season, know that they are in a strong position to determine the future of the competition.



Humphreys, the Ulster captain, rounds off the move that he initiated by scoring his second-half try.

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TODAY
Interims: Pace Micro Technology, Tomkins, Triad, Fisons, Denmans Electrical, Fyffes, Hecas Group, PMS Holdings, RCO Holdings. Economic statistics: November Industrial/manufacturing output, December producer price index, Confederation of British Industry fourth-quarter financial services summary, Institute of Directors quarterly business opinion survey.

TOMORROW
Interims: Bepco, Savills, Wyko Group, Fisons, Bulbough, Economic statistics: British Retail Consortium December retail sales monitor.

WEDNESDAY
Interims: Dixons Group, FI Group, Helton Holdings, Vega Group. Fisons: none scheduled. Economic statistics: December labour market report.

THURSDAY
Interims: Stanley Leisure, FI, nads: Greenwich Resources, ML Laboratories. Economic statistics: none scheduled.

FRIDAY
Interims: none scheduled. Fisons: none scheduled. Economic statistics: none scheduled.

Bank	Buy	Sell
Australia \$	2.69	2.51
Austria Sch.	20.37	19.85
Belgium F	60.37	58.41
Canada \$	2.599	2.411
Cyprus Cyp £	0.8676	0.7961
Denmark Kr.	13.14	10.25
Egypt	5.79	5.18
Finland Mk	8.98	8.23
France Fr	9.77	8.99
Germany DM	2.825	2.663
Greece Dr	484	445
Hong Kong \$	13.53	12.33
Ireland	127	107
Indonesia	1624	1484
Ireland Pt	1.1708	1.0818
Israel Shk	7.05	6.39
Italy Lira	2919	2682
Japan Yen	163.08	150.55
Malta	0.658	0.600
Netherlands Gld	3.315	3.020
New Zealand \$	3.18	2.95
Norway Kr	13.77	11.82
Portugal Esc.	206.75	274.72
S Africa Rd.	10.15	9.20
Spain Pta	247.34	228.55
Sweden Kr	13.77	12.67
Switzerland Fr.	53.88	50.96
Turkey Lira	53881	50296
USA \$	1.747	1.604

Notes for small denomination banknotes only as supplied by Barclays Bank. Different rates apply to travellers' cheques. Rates as at close of trading on Friday.

Dixons offers high street clues

DIXONS GROUP: Half-year results due on Wednesday from the electrical consumer goods retailer will be a highlight of the week for those seeking clues as to the state of high street spending. Brokers expect what, at first sight, will appear to be a flat performance from Dixons, with pre-tax profits either little changed or slightly down on the £77.6 million achieved during the corresponding period last year. The payout to shareholders is expected to grow from 2.9p to 3.35p.

However, these results compare with a strong performance last year that saw the company, whose chairman is Sir Stanley Kalms, benefit from the various building society demutualisation windfalls.

Any benefits from recent interest rate cuts are unlikely to materialise until the second half, or early in the group's next financial year.

Close attention will obviously be paid to any comments made by the group about Christmas trading. Like-for-like sales last year were down about 4 per cent, with sales of personal computers proving dull.

This time analysts are forecasting a rise of between 3 per cent and 4 per cent, although Nick Bubb, of SG Securities, the broker, admits that there is scope for disappointment.

Mr Bubb is looking for pre-tax profits of £74.5 million, which falls around the middle of the range as far as most forecasts from City analysts are concerned.

Retailing generally is likely to have been dull, with the bulk of any growth achieved coming from a wide range of new products, ranging from mobile telephones to personal computers and fax machines.

Sales of personal computers enjoyed useful growth in the second half of last year and the momentum will have been carried over into the six months under review. This growth will have been achieved against a backdrop of lacklustre competition and of price deflation,



Sir Stanley Kalms, a leading figure in Business for Sterling, rings up Dixons's results on Wednesday

which will have put pressure on margins.

The number of subscribers for the group's Preserve Internet joint venture with Energis is expected to have grown to about one million, although the financial benefits to Dixons may be somewhat limited at this stage.

At the last count, Dixons had about £500 million in the bank, and brokers maintain that the abolition of advance corporation tax may provide scope for a redistribution among shareholders.

TOMKINS: Half-year results from the guns to buns group, due to be published today, should show pre-tax profits of between £225 million and £235 million. That compares with profits of £214.9 million last time.

SG Securities, the broker, is looking for the group's half-time pre-tax profits to emerge at about £230 million.

Back in November, Tomkins issued an update on its trading and described it as being "in line with expectations". The company

said that its aim was to expand both organically and through acquisition. Despite this, brokers have been reducing their profit forecasts of late, in response to a slowdown in industrial and automotive markets.

The consensus for the group's full year to April 1999 is now pitched at about £525 million, compared with £530 million previously.

Brokers will want to establish what impact last year's strike at General Motors has had on the

Tomkins automotive division, which takes in Gates and Stant, the makers of windscreen wiper blades and engine-timing belts.

Analysts will also be looking hard at the Rank Hovis McDougall baking and milling division after a period of softening commodity prices and reduced demand.

Apart from the figures, the City will want to know what the company has in mind regarding its acquisition programme.

Tomkins has indicated that it is prepared to spend between £500 million and £700 million on various acquisitions.

The group has already indicated its interest in buying parts of BTR's automotive parts business, should the division be put up for sale and if the proposed merger of BTR with Siebe is concluded.

An interim dividend of about 4p is expected, up from 3.5p.

STANLEY LEISURE: Brokers will be eager to discover what lies in store for the betting office and casino operator after it was fairly comprehensively outbid for the Corals betting chain.

Stanley is Britain's fourth-biggest bookmaker and has achieved a useful track record acquiring the smaller independent bookies. It certainly has the cash resources to make further acquisitions.

Merrill Lynch, the broker, is forecasting interim pre-tax profits of £11.7 million when the group reports on Thursday. That compares with £10.2 million for the corresponding period.

A strong performance is expected from the betting office chain, while casinos should have benefited from a useful increase in consumer spending.

Merrill is worried that sentiment towards the shares could be affected if the rival London Clubs succeeds this month in its application for a casino licence in Luton. This would bring London Clubs head to head against Stanley in an important area for the group.

The payout is expected to grow from 1.4p to 1.6p.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Jobs figures in spotlight

The Bank of England may only have cut rates last Thursday, but with the City convinced that further action is needed, the debate has already begun as to whether the Monetary Policy Committee will reduce rates again next month.

The vital statistics this week will be the Labour market data on Wednesday. The Bank said in a statement on Thursday that it now believed wages pressures are easing. Confirmation in this data that unemployment is beginning to rise rapidly will bolster hopes of a February cut. The market consensus is that the claimant count measure of unemployment will have risen by 10,000 in November, with the unemployment rate standing unchanged at 4.6 per cent.

Although there will be no average earnings data — the series is currently suspended — the City will interpret such a rise in unemployment as the definitive turning point in the labour market.

The industrial production and producer prices data, which are published today, will confirm the extent of the difficulties in the manufacturing sector. City economists, who are predicting that fourth-quarter GDP will show the first contraction since 1992, will cast a particularly keen eye on the data that are vital constituents of the GDP figures.

Analysts expect manufacturing output to record a fall of 0.3 per cent between October and November, ensuring the annual rate of growth shows a contraction for the second consecutive month. Overall industrial production is expected to show a small 0.4 per cent annual rise.

The producer prices data should show raw material prices continuing to decline, with input prices down by 8.3 per cent compared with December the previous year. Factory gate prices are expected to show no annual growth, having risen by 0.2 per cent between November and December.

The BRC sales monitor, to be published tomorrow, should confirm the mixed Christmas performance on the high street.

ALASDAIR MURRAY

SUNDAY TIPS

The Sunday Times: Buy Savills, Gresham Computing. The Sunday Telegraph: Buy Scottish Radio Holdings, Peterhouse Group, TT Group. The Mail on Sunday: Buy J Sainsbury, Great Universal Stores, Scottish & Southern Energy, Racal Electronics. The Express on Sunday: Buy Anite, Luminar, Siebe, Planit.

Knitwear firms face heavy casualties from 'banana war'

By CARL MORTIMER, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDITOR

THE Scottish knitwear industry is being threatened with mass redundancies because of a trade dispute between Europe and the United States over the import of bananas.

Knitwear firms are already feeling the effects of a threat by the US to impose punitive tariffs on a list of European imports, which include cashmere sweaters. The hard-pressed Borders firms could lose up to 900 jobs from the imposition of 100 per cent duty on imports into the US.

Britain's Trade Minister, Brian Wilson, reckons the UK could lose £82 million of exports from the US action, which has been launched in retaliation to the EU's banana regime, labelled discriminatory by Washington. He said: "The biggest single category is cashmere knitwear."

In an effort to head off a tit-for-tat trade war, Brussels is calling for a pause in trade at the summit of the World Trade Organisation in Geneva on Tuesday.

Mr Wilson said: "Britain is supporting a fast-track adjudication procedure. I am acutely aware of the problems faced, through no fault of their own, by companies which export products on the American list. Every effort is being made to head off implementation of the threatened retaliation."

Clan Douglas, a knitwear firm, is already suffering, with a US order worth £1.5 million on hold pending a decision by Washington to proceed with the sanctions.

The US has been fighting for at least a decade what it believes is an illegal quota system favouring banana producers from former EU colonies in the Caribbean and Africa.

The Americans claim that the quota system discriminates against producers from Central America. Although the US produces no bananas, it has a huge financial interest in Central and South American produce because of the influence of US multinationals,

such as Chiquita Brands and Dole.

In 1997 it achieved a victory when a WTO panel ruled against the EU regime, but Washington still believes that a reform package put together in Brussels is inadequate. In December the US published a list of products, ranging from Pecorino cheese to chandeliers, that would be targeted with 100 per cent tariffs.

Mr Wilson said: "We are urging the United States to think again before it is too late, drop its threatened action and pursue its case through the WTO."

The US has been resisting suggestions by the EU that the new regime be referred to a WTO panel because the procedure could take the best part of a year.

However, EU officials believe that the US threat amounts to illegal unilateral action. The US is required to request authorisation for its retaliatory action after January 21. However, Brussels has attempted to pre-empt US action by the unusual step of asking the WTO to review its banana regime in an accelerated 90-day procedure.



The US plans action to help Central American banana producers

OFT rejects calls for loan rates ceiling

By GAVIN LUMSDEN

JOHN BRIDGEMAN, Director-General of Fair Trading, has rejected calls for the introduction of a statutory maximum rate of interest to protect the poor from exploitation from loan sharks and other unscrupulous lenders.

The lack of an official definition of what is an extortionate interest rate will disappoint pressure groups that have lobbied the Office of Fair Trading to introduce such a measure during its year-long inquiry into how the poor and other vulnerable people are treated by the financial services industry.

However, Mr Bridgeman is preparing to make other recommendations when the OFT report is published on Wednesday. These will be aimed at helping low earners and people from ethnic minorities as well as the disabled and elderly to get good value financial service and advice.

One of the factors behind the report is the fact that one in five people in the UK is unable to get bank accounts. As a result people are rejected by credit card and insurance companies and are more likely to turn to back street lenders.

The Money Advice Association (MAA) has long been alarmed by the activities of

door-to-door lenders operating in many of the country's most deprived communities. It believes a statutory interest rate ceiling is essential to stop people being sucked into loans that sometimes end up charging an annual percentage rate (APR) of 3,000 per cent.

Dr Evan Harris, Liberal Democrat MP for Oxford West and Abingdon, is planning to table an early day motion in the House of Commons later this month calling for a ceiling to be set.

John Lammert of the Consumer Credit Association dismissed the MAA's figures as scaremongering.

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Bridgeman: recommendations for good value financial service

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Investment Account	Annual			Monthly		
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£50,000+	5.40	5.15	4.12	5.15	5.03	4.79
£25,000+	5.05	4.80	3.84	4.80	4.70	4.45
£10,000+	4.65	4.40	3.32	4.40	4.31	4.07

Instant Gold Savings Account	Annual			Quarterly		
	Previous	New	Net %	Previous	New	Net %
£50,000+	5.25	5.00	4.00	4.75	4.67	4.37
£25,000+	4.70	4.45	3.56	4.45	4.38	4.14
£10,000+	4.40	4.15	3.32	4.15	4.09	3.84
£2,500+	4.05	3.80	3.04	3.80	3.75	3.50

Flexible Savings Account	Annual			Monthly		
	Previous	New	Net %	Previous	New	Net %
£10,000+	3.05	2.70	2.16	2.80	2.76	2.42
£5,000+	2.55	2.20	1.76	2.30	2.28	1.93
£2,500+	2.30	2.00	1.60	2.05	2.03	1.74
Below £250	0.20	0.20	0.16	0.20	0.20	0.16

TERRA	Previous		New	
	AER %	Gross %	AER %	Gross %
All Balances	6.15%		5.80	

Asset Management Service Investment Account	Previous			New		
	AER %	Gross %	Net %	AER %	Gross %	Net %
£100,000+	5.70	5.55	4.45	5.32	4.25	
£50,000+	5.30	5.18	4.05	4.94	3.95	
£25,000+	4.95	4.84	3.70	4.50	3.58	
£10,000+	4.55	4.46	3.30	4.22	3.37	
Below £10,000	2.30	2.28	1.95	1.93	1.55	

Young Savers Account	Previous			New		
	AER %	Gross %	Net %	AER %	Gross %	Net %
£1+	3.55	3.50	3.55	3.50	2.80	

Hardway Account	Previous			New		
	AER %	Gross %	Net %	AER %	Gross %	Net %
£500+	1.51	1.50	1.26	1.25	1.50	
£250+	1.26	1.25	1.00	1.00	0.80	
£100+	1.00	1.00	0.75	0.75	0.60	
£50+	0.50	0.50	0.25	0.25	0.20	
£1+	0.25	0.25	0.20	0.20	0.16	

Deposit Account	Previous			New		
	AER %	Gross %	Net %	AER %	Gross %	Net %
£1+	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.20	

*For amounts below the minimum opening balance, the interest rate paid will be AER/Gross 0.20% and Net 0.16%. Interest rates may vary from time to time. All rates are per annum except where stated. AER stands for Annual Equivalent Rate and is the national rate which illustrates the gross or tax-free rate as it is paid and compounded on an annual basis. As every advert for a savings product will contain an AER you will be able to compare more easily what return you can expect from your savings over time. GROSS - Gross rate is the contractual rate of interest payable before the deduction of income tax at the rate specified by law. NET - The rate of interest which would be payable after allowing for the deduction of income tax at the rate specified by law. TAX-FREE - The contractual rate of interest payable where interest is exempt from income tax. Interest is normally paid at the net rate, unless the Account falls within an exempt category or the Account-holder qualifies to receive interest gross.

Special New Year offer. Open a Young Savers Account for your child by 29 January 1999 and receive double the normal rate of interest until the year 2000 - 7.00% at current rates for balances up to £2,000. Details and full terms and conditions are available from your local branch.

Details of current savings rates are available by calling 0845 300 0102. Alternatively visit our website - www.lloydsbank.co.uk

These rates of interest apply with effect from 11 January 1999



Part of the Lloyds TSB Group

CHANGE ON WEEK

US Dollar
1.6401 (-0.0239)
Euro
0.7040 (n/a)
Exchange Index
99.2 (-0.5)
Bank of England official close (4pm)

FT 30 share
3663.1 (+111.8)
FTSE 100
6147.2 (+264.6)
New York Dow Jones
9643.32 (+453.91)
Tokyo Nikkei Avge
13391.81 (-450.36)

THE FACTS

Turnover: £3.5 billion.
Pre-tax profit: £740 million;
market cap, £6.4 billion;
employees, 4,300.
Overview: Britain's biggest non-nuclear generator, National Power has a strong international presence. It has been spending overseas as its domestic market is squeezed by competitors and government demands that it sell some power stations.
Brands: National Power, Midlands Electricity.

THE BOARD

Sir John Collins took over the chairmanship of National Power last year from John Baker, who had moved on from an occasionally controversial spell as chief executive. Sir John, who was until 1993 chairman and chief executive of Shell UK, is a director of BSKyB and of NM Rothschild and is chairman of Cantab Pharmaceuticals.
Keith Henry became chief executive in 1995, after being recruited from Brown & Root, of which he was chief executive. He is a non-executive director of Enterprise Oil.

Roger Whitcomb, finance director, has been with the generator since 1990, when he joined the company from BP. Another recruit from BP is Graham Brown, commercial director. He managed BP's crude oil and products trading division before joining National Power in 1994.

Brian Court, operations and technology director, rose through the ranks of the pre-privatised Central Electricity Generating Board. He was appointed to National Power's board three years ago.

Andrew Swanson is National Power's company secretary.
Mike Herbert is an international director for the Asia Pacific region, and Peter Wiedner is international director for the western hemisphere.

National Power's non-executive directors include: Sir Alastair Morton, the former chairman of Eurotunnel and the new railway tsar; and Brandon Gough, the man brought in by Yorkshire Water to shake things up after its poor performance during the 1995 drought.

When National Power recently put up for sale its giant Drax power station, a sea change was signalled for the once-mighty generator.

Here was a company that, just after privatisation, commanded 46 per cent of English and Welsh power production and is now dressing up its biggest and best plant for disposal.

The move, ordered by the Government, will leave National Power with about 12 to 13 per cent of electricity output after one of the most dramatic losses of market share suffered by any business.

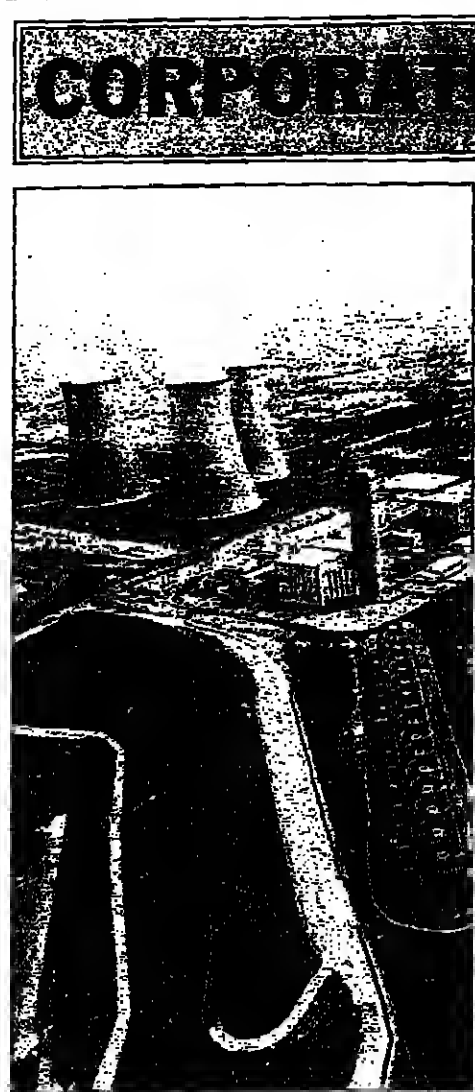
The sale, along with that forced upon PowerGen, was an attempt by the Department of Trade and Industry to stir up competition in electricity generation — part of the power industry that has faced a tide of complaints for high charges and the ability of two, and later three, companies to set power prices. Since the inefficient fragmentation of the industry by the Conservatives to prepare it for sale, the generators have been dogged by controversy over market dominance, have been dealt two orders to sell power stations and have faced a short-lived price cap.

Once the Drax sale is complete, National Power should be able to put behind it much of the regulatory uncertainty that has hung over the company since privatisation. At least that is what Keith Henry, chief executive, believes. "Drax has to be the last thing we ever divest in this country," he said.

The company will be much smaller in the UK, but able to spend freely overseas, where it has directed much of its attention for several years. It has already invested £1.5 billion in power projects across the globe, from Houston to Bangkok and Sydney.

A clearer picture of the way forward for National Power will make life easier for Mr Henry, who was largely hired by John Baker, the previous chief executive and until last year National Power's chairman, for his international enthusiasm.

Mr Henry has been frustrated by the level of uncertainty and government involvement in generation, which is not even a regulated area. "It is very difficult managing such a downsizing and one that comes out of the blue," he said. "We had thought that the first plant divestment [of 4,000 megawatts three years ago] was a final arrangement and then came another one. It would have been much better if the industry had been privatised more in the shape of how it is now, rather than ad hoc restructuring."



Global demand offers bright prospects, despite more competition in the market. Diced, the Oxfordshire plant, left, and middle, second column, outstrip Bangladesh's output. Under Keith Henry, right, National Power's interests include the Little Barford power plant, top, and Kirby Moor wind farm, bottom

Three years ago PowerGen bid for Midlands Electricity, and National Power followed with a takeover attempt on Southern Electric. Both bids were blocked by Ian Lang, then Trade and Industry Secretary.

The Labour Government proved more receptive — allowing PowerGen's takeover last year of East Midlands. National Power's purchase of Midlands' supply business — launched last November — was different. It had steered away from paying for the whole package of distribution and supply

— the two operations that make up a regional business. The generator's idea was to buy its way into a customer base without also taking on a heavily regulated and ill-growth business in distribution. Mr Henry wants to form further alliances with supply companies, although there are signs that he could face unease from the DTI over this. He will press on, and says: "I can't see any reason why we shouldn't do more."

integrated — controlling power from the power station to the household plug.

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tricity is about to be changed. It is intended that next year — although the date may slip — power trading will switch from the present pool system to bilateral contracts and demand-led buying. This will shake the operation of the generators, throwing them into a market that is likely to be far less secure for their product than the current one.

National Power's brand may well be better known overseas than at home. It is through the exporting of expertise that is well associated with the British deregulated market that the generator has been able to make much of its headway in international joint ventures and privatisation programmes.

The generator's approach to overseas ventures is like that of a flying doctor. It parachutes its own staff in small numbers into new ventures to instil into the local management and workers the culture and experience of National Power. In many areas, its approach is more incremental than the headline megamerger deals favoured by some of its competitors. Its interests in the US, for example, are more than half the size of PacificCorp — the company recently bought by ScottishPower.

Mr Henry believes that the potential of the international market is enormous, although it has its difficulties. National Power's involvement in Pakistan, particularly with the Hub power project, cost the business £25 million after the Government terminated contract payments. Elsewhere, many privatisation programmes are slowing down.

However, overall, the growth expected in the world power market is huge, triggered by the needs of developing countries. It has been estimated that over the next ten years up to 800 gigawatts of new power will be needed in the world — equivalent to 200 Drax stations.

CHRISTINE BUCKLEY

Ethical expression! 6/10
Fat-cat quotient! 6/10
Financial record 7/10
Share performance 6/10
Attitude to staff 9/10
Strength of brand 7/10
Innovation 7/10
Annual report 8/10
City star rating 7/10
Future prospects 7/10
Total 70/100

Ethical expression! is evaluated by Transparency World. The latest quarterly, in which best leadership practices are highlighted, is provided by C&A Consulting.

Internet shopping 'set to boom' SFI unveils millennium plans

BY SARAH CUNNINGHAM

SHOPPING on the Internet is expected to enjoy spectacular growth and even last year it managed to attract one million UK customers — double the total a year earlier — including a growing number of middle-aged and older people.

The Internet currently accounts for just 0.2 per cent of retail sales, but a new report expects this to rise to 2.5 per cent in the next four years. Electronic commerce will then be worth more than £6 billion annually. US Internet retailers' success at Christmas led to a frenzy of speculation on Wall Street at the turn of the year.

The number of people aged 15 to 24 buying from Internet sites has dropped sharply.

Verdict, the retail consultancy behind the report, blames the slowness of the Internet and a lack of innovation on many retailers' websites. By contrast, the number of people aged over 45 using the medium for shopping has increased dramatically, which Verdict cites as evidence that electronic shopping is moving into the mainstream and the mass market.

Retailers have been slow to respond to the growing demand. So far, only 14 of the 100 largest UK retailers have websites from which goods can be ordered.

Another 33 have "non-transactional" websites that offer only information.

A small but growing number of customers have begun e-mailing companies asking them to begin selling online, the

report says. The products that are most likely to become more popular purchases on the Internet are computer software and games, books and music and video. Clothing will also grow as an electronic market. Interactive shopping on television is seen as potentially exciting, although the report says that "details of how this service will operate in practice are sketchy so it is difficult to comment definitively about how it will fit in."

One obstacle that Internet retailers will have to overcome is customers' concern about security. Verdict's consumer research shows that more than 50 per cent of Internet purchasers are concerned about giving their credit card details over the Internet.

BY DOMINIC WALSH

SFI GROUP, the pub operator, is planning to offer all-in food and drinks packages in an effort to open its doors on the eve of the millennium without being held to ransom by staff. Bar workers are demanding up to £250 an hour and DJs are holding out for £2,500 to work New Year's Eve, causing a number of pub chains, including JD Wetherspoon, to scrap plans for millennium festivities.

But SFI, which saw a 5 per cent rise in like-for-like sales in the four weeks to January 3, used last New Year's Eve to try out a scheme that reduced staff numbers by 20 per cent and employed the latest technology to beam in music and entertain-

ment from Chrysalis without the need for an on-site DJ. This has avoided a potential "ransom situation".

Some 600 tickets were pre-sold at the Litten Tree in Bournemouth, the £25 price being inclusive of all drinks and a self-service buffet.

Andrew Latham, SFI's commercial director, said the evening had proved extremely successful — and profitable — and the concept would be tested again in the middle of the year and used across most of the group's 60 pubs, including its Bar Med chain, on New Year's Eve. "We learnt a lot of lessons about how to minimise the number of staff we need," Mr Latham said.

He said no decision had yet been taken

on how much staff would be paid this year, but it might take the form of a "significant loyalty payment" from a special bonus pool. The ticket price has also yet to be decided.

One of the aspects the trial addressed was alcohol consumption in the context of a free bar. "There were no incidents or major problems at all," Mr Latham said. "In fact, there were probably fewer than on a normal night. One chap was asked to leave and three or four were told they had enough to drink, but it all went very smoothly and produced a real party atmosphere."

The Home Office has announced that pubs will be allowed to stay open all night and SFI is planning a night-long event culminating in a hot breakfast.

1998	Low	Mid Cap	Price	Wtd	TM	P/E	1998	Low	Mid Cap	Price	Wtd	TM	P/E	1998	Low	Mid Cap	Price	Wtd	TM	P/E	1998	Low	Mid Cap	Price	Wtd	TM	P/E
3	0	2.40	10	0	6	2	7.03	10	0	46	17	4.43	10	0	1	0	1.00	10	0
191	24	12.20	10	0	455	10	9.40	10	0	47	3	6.78	10	0	18	0	0.10	10	0
127	12	12.20	10	0	32	17	11.90	10	0	15	3	7.70	10	0	182	10	0.10	10	0
271	17	29.40	10	0	16	19	11.90	10	0	29	17	1.96	10	0	45	3	1.00	10	0
87	2	6.01	10	0	135	79	7.03	10	0	25	7	1.96	10	0	45	3	1.00	10	0
7	3	3.65	10	0	30	10	7.70	10	0	55	35	13.70	10	0	45	3	1.00	10	0
30	2	31.70	10	0	23	14	7.70	10	0	200	122	9.44	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
32	2	10.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
322	2	0.67	10	0	23	14	7.70	10	0	200	122	9.44	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
102	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
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118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
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118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
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118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
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118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
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118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0
118	2	31.70	10	0	40	10	14.80	10	0	70	12	1.96	10	0	200	23	0.10	10	0		

Mass delusion of US stock market

There's no stopping the equity market bandwagon. Last week the US stock market posted all-time highs. Yes, I know that there was a new year and the birth of a new currency to celebrate. But this was surely exuberance beyond the call of duty. The performance of the US stock market continues to amaze — and to demand explanation.

According to one view, the explanation is simple. This is a classic inflationary boom caused by rapid growth of the money supply. The spillover into generalised inflation has been held back by the effects of the Asian crisis, the earlier strength of the dollar and the weakness of commodity prices. But just you wait. Some time soon, the wider effects will come through and inflation will take off.

On this view, far from deserving the man of the year award, the Fed Chairman, Alan Greenspan, has made an appalling mistake in cutting US interest rates. Low rates have encouraged bank borrowing and this has inflated the money supply. Flush with cash, investors

have sought other assets — hence the great rush into equities. This is a repeat of the story played out in Britain in the late Eighties, only this time the asset bubble is primarily in stocks rather than residential property. Eventually, what Greenspan has caused through setting interest rates too low he will have to correct by raising them — and that will prick the stock market bubble.

But there are other ways of explaining US monetary growth. The surge of the stock market has itself encouraged borrowing. Individuals have been made to feel richer and this has prompted them to spend above their current earnings, financed by borrowing. So monetary growth and rising stock prices may go together, but it may be the strength of the stock market that lies behind the monetary growth and not the other way round.

For companies, the relationship has been symbiotic. Major support for the stock market has come from US companies buying back their own shares, financed either by increased borrowing, or by cash that might otherwise have been used to reduce borrowing. As the market has risen, this strategy has been vindicated, thereby encouraging more of the same.

Simultaneously, monetary growth has been boosted by a big structural shift. The US current account deficit with the rest of the world has continued to grow. This by itself has required increased finance, but, meanwhile, the Federal Government has moved into surplus. (So much for the idea that current account deficits and fiscal deficits are two sides of the same coin.) This internal shift is profoundly important for the growth of the US money supply because



ROGER BOOTLE

the Government does not borrow from the banks, but the two sectors whose financial balance is deteriorating, namely persons and corporations, do.

So if monetary growth is not the fundamental explanation for the exuberance of the equity market, what is? My answer will not appeal to those who believe in the

falling rationality of financial markets. I think the valuation of the US equity market has about it the quality of a mass delusion, which feeds on itself, rather like a chain letter. Such phenomena are, after all, far from unknown in the world of investment. The South Sea Bubble and the Dutch Tulip Mania readily spring to mind.

At the root of the present delusion is the unpreparedness of investors to accept pedestrian returns on their portfolios after the heady rewards of the past. Cash or bonds paying only 5 per cent or so can readily be dismissed as boring. The prevailing view is that there must be something that is going to yield 20 per cent-plus. Equities have returned that in the past, so why not stick with a winner?

The sophisticated version of this is the view derived from statistical studies that equities "always" out-

perform in the end. But if the economy is to grow by 4 per cent real in the good times and perhaps 2.5 per cent on average, while the prices that businesses can charge for their products are rising by 1 to 2 per cent, why should there be an asset class that is going to return you 20 per cent-plus?

The fact that investors have recently enjoyed spectacular returns from equities should make you more cautious, not less.

Moreover, the bull market seems to be propelled by two completely opposite sorts of stock. On the one side, there are the high-tech stocks, which power ahead even though they have next to no earnings. Amazon.com, the online book and music retailer, last week announced that revenues had quadrupled in the fourth quarter but also warned analysts not to expect a lower quarterly loss as a re-

sult. The effect? The shares immediately rose 5 per cent.

On the other side, there are the old sectors, where stocks rise on the prospects for "consolidation". Even the weaker performers zoom ahead on the view that they will be taken over. There was a time when over-capacity was sorted out at great cost to the shareholders by companies going bust. Now, the shareholders seem to enjoy a bonanza.

Worry about an upsurge of inflation in the US, if you like. Personally, I am more concerned by the idea that the US is playing out a different version of what happened in Japan. Asset values have detached themselves from the income streams that they generate. When reality dawns, the result will be a crash towards deflation. Far from rising sharply, US interest rates and bond yields would then be driven to super-low levels. We are indeed supremely fortunate that we have Alan Greenspan, and not some mad monetarist, to chart a course through these treacherous waters.

Efforts to tackle bug could end in bust

By CARL MORTIMER

FEARS are growing that efforts by large companies to protect their businesses from the millennium bug could lead to a rapid boom followed by a bust at the turn of the century.

Evidence is emerging of stockpiling in both raw materials and products as firms attempt to ringfence their operations from anticipated distribution and supply-chain failures caused by computer failures.

The possibility of computer meltdown, known as the Year 2000 (Y2K) problem, is caused

by the inability of older generation computer programmes and hardware to recognise dates in four digits. Billions of pounds are being spent to correct the problem but concern about panic buying is encouraging firms to stockpile.

Drug companies are planning sharp increases in inventory to guarantee supplies of essential drugs, while just-in-time manufacturers in areas such as food and in the car industry are seeking guarantees from suppliers.

The prospect of a sudden build-up in stocks is worrying investment analysts who believe that some companies have failed to alert investors to a potential problem.

Bill O'Neill, economist at HSBC, the investment bank, reckons that defensive behaviour in anticipation of a "millennium bomb" will give a quick boost to the economy while at the same time depressing corporate profits in 1999. He said: "It will depress profits to the extent that firms need working capital to build up inventory."

Evidence from Cap Gemini, the information technology group, suggests that firms are planning to stockpile and the trend is likely to worsen. According to its survey of 1,700 businesses in two countries, about a third overall were planning to increase inventories and as much as 38 per cent of US firms. Chris Webster of Cap Gemini said that the survey, undertaken last year, was about intentions. He expects the number to increase. "People have less confidence in their suppliers than in their own systems and many are building boxes around their organisations." The trend is evident among drug companies, such as SmithKline Beecham, Zeneca and Novartis. Virginia Pascoe, analyst at HSBC, said that she will be adjusting her forecasts for the sector to take account of the cost of increased inventories. "They are planning to build up stocks themselves because they do not want wholesalers to increase stocks."

The drug industry is highly sensitive, particularly in the large US healthcare market, to price pressure from buyers. A build-up in stock by wholesalers could hand buyers a weapon that could boomerang back on manufacturers. Mr Webster sees a wider threat to the whole of industry if the trend picks up. "A mini-crash is a real risk."

FT plans edition in German

By RAYMOND SNOOPY
MEDIA EDITOR

THE *Financial Times* is considering the launch of a German language edition as part of its expansion plans in Europe.

Andrew Gowers, Deputy Editor of the business daily and acting Editor for more than 12 months during a period spent by the Editor, Richard Lambert, in the US, will move to Germany almost immediately to explore the feasibility of the project.

The FT is likely to announce today that Peter Martin, international edition editor, will become deputy editor. Pearson, the media and information group that owns the FT, announced nearly two years ago that it was to spend up to £100 million developing the paper over five years, mainly in the US. Mr Lambert went to the US to spearhead a successful effort to expand in the American market, and increased sales there have helped to record peaks of more than 380,000. It is expected that Mr Gowers, a former Reuters Zurich correspondent who is fluent in German, will perform the same role in Germany, with the title of Editorial Director. Mr Gowers said: "We don't have a venture yet but it looks promising."



Retailers say January sales have not compensated for weak pre-Christmas figures. Consumers appear to have money but lack confidence to spend it

Christmas sales confirm retailers' fears

By JANET BUSH
ECONOMICS EDITOR

THE Christmas shopping season appears to have lived up to retailers' worst fears, with figures tomorrow expected to show that retail sales failed to grow in December compared with a year ago.

The British Retail Consortium is also expected to announce a drop in sales in the October to December period compared with the previous three months.

confirming that consumer spending has slowed markedly.

The BRC has not reported a zero year-on-year figure since it started compiling its Monthly Sales Monitor in January 1994, and a flat figure is likely to prompt calls from the retailers' representative for more interest rate cuts to head off an even more severe slowdown on the high street.

A gloomy set of BRC figures will dash hopes raised last week by positive trading state-

ments from Next and Clinton Cards and by a slightly less gloomy survey of distributive trades from the Confederation of British Industry.

In December 1997 a slow run-up to Christmas was compensated for by healthy January sales: a season of two halves. However, retailers are reporting that this year the sales have not been strong enough to compensate for weak pre-Christmas weeks.

Retailers said that they were

happily by the poor showing from consumers, saying that they appear to have money but not the confidence to spend it. There has been a great deal of anecdotal evidence that consumers are prepared to buy, but only at highly competitive prices.

However, TJ Hughes, a discount department store operating largely in the North West and the Midlands, yesterday reported a 44 per cent rise in total sales during the Christmas period, with like-for-like sales

(stripping out changes in retailing floor space) up 12 per cent.

John Lewis said on Friday that its sales had risen by 21 per cent in the Christmas week, but the figures were boosted by the opening of a new store in Bristol. Analysts estimated that like-for-like sales were down about 2 per cent.

Christmas trading statements are imminent from large retailers such as Kingfisher, Boots, Great Universal Stores, Selfridges and Dixons.

Tay rebel seeks quick turnaround

By ROBERT LEA

THE dissident Tay Homes shareholder trying to oust its board and make himself chief executive has no intention of staying involved in running the northern housebuilder.

Richard Tice, joint chief executive of the privately owned Sunley Group, a 10 per cent shareholder in Tay, has forced a special meeting of Tay investors, likely to be next month, at which he is seeking the removal of the four main directors.

Mr Tice, who is critical of Tay's share price performance, claims to have the sup-

port of Tay's largest investor, PDM, the fund manager, which holds 17 per cent of it.

Mr Tice admitted that the management team he has assembled to displace Tay's board will be a stop-gap. "We plan to act as facilitators in the turnaround of this business," he said. "We intend to cut the cost base and cut back debt and then merge the business to create a larger entity."

Mr Tice, 34, grandson of Sunley's founder, said merger plans did not include linking Tay to Sunley, its rival builder.

Taiwan deal for Alstom

ALSTOM, the Anglo-French engineering company, will today sign a €650 million (£450 million) contract for construction of a coal-fired power plant in Taiwan (Janet Bush writes).

The contract with Ho-Ping Power Corporation is one of the first private initiatives in independent power production in Taiwan, according to Alstom. Building work will begin this month, with commercial operation expected to begin in 2002.

Alstom will be responsible for the design, supply, construction and commissioning of the plant, including the civil engineering.

Cantor locked in dispute with BT

By JASON NISSE

CANTOR FITZGERALD, one of the world's leading money-brokers, is in a bitter dispute with British Telecom about a worldwide trading system that Cantor says does not work.

The International Trading Platform ordered from BT's Synagra Systems division two years ago at a cost of £2.4 million plus VAT was supposed to link Cantor's giant dealing room in the City with its headquarters in New York and its offices in Frankfurt, Milan and Luxembourg.

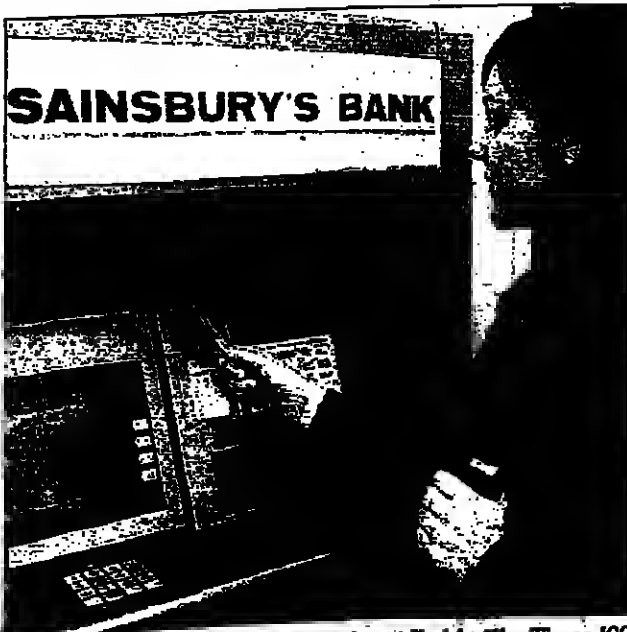
The system involved com-

munications links between dealing screen along with computer hardware and software. Cantor, a specialist in money market transactions, runs trading operations 24 hours a day around the world, passing the "trading book" across time zones from the US to Europe and then to the Far East and back to the US.

The deal was seen as a coup for the Synagra Systems operation. However, Cantor claims that problems began to emerge as the system was being installed.

Case studies aid business students

By SARAH CUNNINGHAM



The launch of Sainsbury's Bank is studied in *The Times 100*

CAN you imagine what goes into converting a Spitfire factory into the production plant for the new Jaguar S-Type? Or how to set about launching a brand new bank?

If you want an insight into these and many other challenges faced by modern businesses, then this year's *The Times 100* is here to help. This specialist guide for students of business and economics is now in its fourth edition and boasts a collection of inside stories from more than 50 leading organisations.

The case studies, which are aimed at assisting the teaching of GCSE A-level and GNVQ business studies syllabuses, range from British Aerospace explaining the role of asset management, Cadbury Schweppes on the im-

portance of cause-related marketing and Boots on the relaunch of its 17 range of cosmetics to appeal to "girls with attitude".

The publication is sent free of charge, courtesy of the contributors and *Times Newspapers*, to all UK secondary schools and colleges of higher and further education — about 5,700 institutions. With, between them, about 750,000 14- to 18-year-old students of business studies or economics.

The case studies underline the message that business is anything but boring. Jaguar, which is part of the Ford group, explains how it developed its new S-Type and prepared Castle Bromwich, a factory built in 1938 by the Ministry of Aviation, so that

the entire car could be assembled at the single site.

Sainsbury's, the supermarkets group, explains how it took advantage of changes in high street banking to launch its own fully fledged bank, the first of its kind in the United Kingdom.

Golden Wonder goes into the thinking that lay behind its own launch of a low-fat crisp. The idea came from observing the rise of the lunch-box culture, with so many people being too busy to have a proper midday meal, and the consumer's desire for healthier foods.

The idea behind *The Times 100* is to give students up-to-date information that can be used alongside their textbooks so that they can understand an ever-changing business world.

Something of Interest from Charles Schwab

All cash balances on Charles Schwab share trading accounts can earn you interest. With effect from Monday 11th of January 1999, the following new interest rates will be applied to cash balances held on Share Trading accounts.

Gross Interest p.a. based on cash balances	PEP Accounts	MarketMaster	Frequent Traders Club	Traded Options
£20,000+	3.75%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%
£5,000-£19,999	3.25%	3.75%	3.75%	3.75%
£500-£4,999	1.75%	1.75%	1.75%	1.75%
£50-£499	1.25%	1.25%	1.25%	1.25%

All interest rates are correct at the time of going to press and replace all previously quoted rates.

For more information on Charles Schwab Dealing Accounts please call our literature request line on 0870 601 8888 - ref: TT494

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Savills set to face takeover bid from investor

BY MARTIN WALLER

Richard Ellis, part of the US-based Insignia Group, yesterday confirmed that it is in talks with St Quintin to create a group with a combined turnover of £60 million.

TRINITY, the UK's largest regional newspaper group, yesterday pulled out of merger talks with Mirror Group for a second time, amid rumours of disputes in the Mirror camp.

Trinity issued a curt statement saying that it was "withdrawing

from merger talks with the Mirror Group with immediate effect". However, the move was last night being interpreted as a tactical withdrawal after the reopening of talks in November and negotiations that were in progress as recently as last week.

David Montgomery, the Mirror Group chief executive, yesterday said: "We are still interested in

Trinity, whose papers include the *Belfast Telegraph*, the *Liverpool Post* and the *Western Mail*, is believed to have proposed an all-share deal that would have given Trinity shareholders 45 per cent of the enlarged group, to the Mirror's 55 per cent. However, Mirror directors are

holding out for a 60-40 split in Mirror's favour. Ever since the start, early last year, of preliminary talks between the two companies, which were broken off at Easter, Trinity has insisted that its chief executive, Philip Graf, and not Mr Montgomery should run the enlarged group.

The two sides last night put forward irreconcilable accounts of the

breakdown of talks. Trinity's decision to pull out was being attributed to a split between Mirror executive directors led by Mr Montgomery and non-executive directors led by Sir Victor Blank, the Mirror chairman. Mr Montgomery was being accused in print of having held talks with Morgan Stanley on a possible management buyout, something

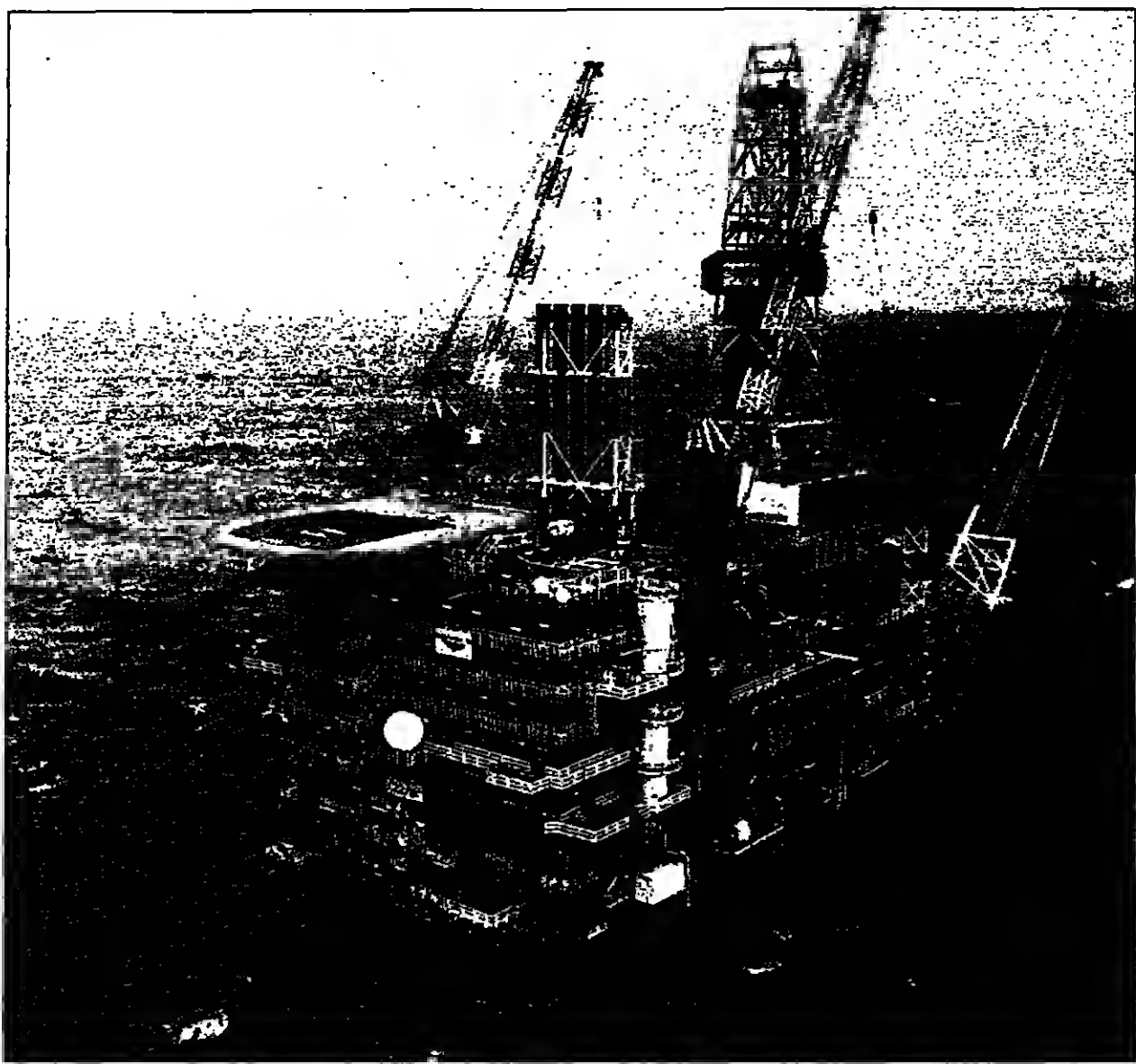
The Mirror camp insists that its board is united on the principle of a merger with Trinity if the right terms can be obtained. The main issues in talks between the two last week are believed to have been price and the likely synergies between Trinity and Mirror Group.

By CARL MORTISHED, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EDITOR

News of the talks is likely to put both companies into play. BG, the gas pipeline and exploration company, is known to harbour ambitions to increase its exploration activity.

Graham has never given up on his ambition to merge the two companies after the bungled takeover bid. Shareholders demanded that he take a back seat and relinquish the

Lasmo, valued at £900 million on Friday, is worth half its value at the time of the Enterprise bid. The latter's shares have suffered a similar fall.



The Enterprise-operated Nelson platform is one of the most prolific producers in the UK sector of the North Sea.

BY PAUL DURMAN
AND PETER HARRISON

SMITHKLINE BEECHAM is resorting to barter to secure rights to a promising meningitis vaccine developed in Cuba. Negotiations with Cuba's Finlay Institute have been complicated by American legisla-

tion that prohibits trade with Cuba. SB's Belgian-based vaccines business is a subsidiary of the pharmaceutical group's American arm, which has raised the possibility that the vaccine might fall foul of the Helms-Burton Act.

Recent industry rumours suggested that SB was plan-

ning to take legal action against the US Government on the grounds that its operation of the Cuban embargo was denying an important medicine to patients.

SB struck an agreement in principle with the Finlay Institute late last year. To address US concerns about hard currency trade with Cuba, SB provisionally agreed that payments to Finlay while the vaccine moves through development

Any royalty payments on the vaccine, which could take another four or five years to bring to market, will be paid half in cash and half in goods. The vaccine is already available in Cuba and some other South American countries.

BY CARL MORTISHED

BAA, the airport group, is considering floating Lynton, its property development arm, as part of a strategic review of its core businesses.

A BAA spokesman confirmed that a demerger of Lynton was under consideration for financial reasons. He said: "There is a real debate on this. There is a lot of value locked up in Lynton and the question is: Can we finance the development of the property business within the group?"

Speculation that BAA, headed by Sir John Egan, would hive off its property assets has grown since the group expanded its off-airport activities into factory outlets through a venture with McArthur Glen. Lynton has assets exceeding £500 million and last year made operating profits of £31 million, a relatively small contribution to BAA's £480 million profit, despite its big asset base. BAA took over Lynton for £222 million in 1988 near the

property market's peak, and the business's off-airport assets became a liability as the market fell.

led by Gordon Edington, who joined BAA with Lynton and is still chairman of the property business. For a while, he headed BAA's international businesses.



Egan: strategic review

BY ALASDAIR MURRAY
ECONOMICS
CORRESPONDENT

THE City is fearful that the arrival of the single currency will result in sweeping job losses in the Square Mile, a survey published today shows.

The KPMG Euro survey, taken just ahead of last week's Euro launch, also confirms that City businesses are overwhelmingly in favour of British entry into the single currency.

The survey finds that 40 per cent of City companies expect job losses because of Britain's euro opt-out, while nearly 50 per cent believe London will be less attractive to overseas investors as a result. This contrasts with just 8 per cent of companies that believe the City's non-euro status will result in increased jobs and about a fifth of businesses that anticipate the City will still be able to attract extra business.

City firms are also increasingly warming to UK membership of the single currency, with 51 per cent more in favour of joining than six months ago.

By CHRIS AYRES

MISBEHAVIOUR at office Christmas parties is expected to lead to record levels of litigation by employees this year.

The warning by Osborne Clarke, the solicitors, came as news emerged of a senior Army officer who had been suspended after he was accused of groping female colleagues at a Christmas party in Aldershot, Hampshire. The

military police are now investigating Lieutenant Colonel Mike Godkin, a 43-year-old father-of-two, who was accused of "behaviour unbecoming of that rank".

Osborne Clarke estimates that up to 1,000 assault and sexual harassment cases related to Christmas and new year office parties will be launched throughout the country this month. Eversheds, another law firm, also said it was work-

ing on "a raft of cases". The awards given in such cases usually range from £5,000 to £15,000.

Up-and-coming cases include a male factory trainee suing a group of female factory workers for pulling off his trousers as part a drunken jape.

Nick Moore, head of employment at Osborne Clarke, said: "There is now a much greater awareness among employees of the potential for claims."

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